

GLOBAL AND PERSONAL:
EXPLORING STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS' COMMUNICATION OF
THEIR EXPERIENCES IN AN ONLINE GLOBAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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The number of American undergraduate students participating in study abroad programs is increasing annually. Educators, questioning the quality and impact of students' learning and their inability to articulate experiences while abroad, have looked to improve intercultural communication. Reflection is frequently recommended as a pedagogical tool to help students examine and connect their experiences to larger ideas of culture, society, and globalization. However, there are few examples in research literature of study abroad students' written reflection to different audiences and in digital contexts.

This study explored how undergraduate students wrote about their study abroad experiences in a digitally mediated, pedagogical context with young American audiences from underserved backgrounds. It inquired how pedagogically-oriented curriculum did or did not support students' intercultural learning and processes of reflection. Through document analysis and a qualitative survey of 30 students, and interviews with seven key informants, the study analyzed the products and processes of reflection and writing.

The study found that the undergraduate sojourners represented themselves as travelers who had overcome institutional and socioeconomic barriers in order to pursue their academic and personal goals. Participants wrote about warmth, belonging, and their experiences of receptivity by local people and expressed openness and motivation to write for an authentic audience. A minority of the students wrote from a self-

interrogative, implicative perspective where they considered ideas of privilege and critically examined cultural norms. Similarly, a small number questioned the content of the curriculum and tone of their writing, perhaps because of the curricular constraints and presentation of the positive benefits of learning through travel. Overall, the structure of the curriculum facilitated students' communication as thoughtful citizens not just of their local communities, but also of the world, as they considered their audiences, their position as American travelers, and their relationships with local people. The study supports structured and free-form writing to authentic audiences as a tool for cultivating reflection, exploring identity, and making global and local connections in study abroad contexts. It urges educators to reflect on the goals and conditions for cultivating openness to locals and distant audiences and critical awareness of one's cultural and social identity.

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PROLOGUE

Even today, I fondly recall my memories as an exchange student in Berlin, Germany, during the spring semester of my junior year in college. My interest in 20th-century German history and visual culture originated with a general curiosity in modernist European literature and germinated in school through a language class I took. I made the decision to travel somewhat carefully, but at the end of the day it still felt spontaneous, and nothing could have prepared me for the actual trip itself. Truthfully, I was influenced by the overwhelmingly positive experience of another student who convinced me to take a chance and study abroad, even if it meant shifting my studies around and leaving the comfort of my friends and university routine. Like many other students in my study abroad program, I partook in a series of hybrid educational experiences while abroad that occurred inside and outside of a university classroom; I spent a month with a kind German host family in their well-appointed house in West Berlin, who helped me move into an apartment in a gritty part of former East Berlin that I shared with a German roommate a few years older than me.

The academic learning abroad was immensely challenging; at first I struggled to understand the spoken and written language with my limited written and spoken proficiency. I had originally imagined that 2 years of German language study would prepare me for time spent there, but I discovered upon arrival that I was ill-prepared for the immersive conversational experiences and the hefty readings I received from my classes (example: my favorite German word ever, although not my favorite word when used in its typical media context: *Massenvernichtungswaffen*.) I participated in a combination program where I enrolled in classes at a local German university with

mostly other German students, a German language class with international students, and a set of electives with a consortium of American undergraduates from different schools. In my first month, there were many nights in which I held a highlighter in my hand and underlined or looked up every single word of my university readings. My roommate helped me throughout the semester, speaking to me patiently and inviting me to many social events such as barbecues or outdoor movies. We spent countless hours in our living room talking about German and American politics, culture, and relationships.

I also met and befriended university students from my own college, other American universities, and European students; I used them for emotional and social support and simply to ease the pressure of thinking and speaking German all the time. We went on trips out of the country and attended local parties and events. On my own, I took photos with my digital camera and wrote in a personal journal. Smartphones did not exist, and I only spoke with my family once or twice a week with my German “handy” or communicated with them via email. By the end of my six-month stay, my language skills and my knowledge had significantly improved. My roommate’s kindness and the host family that I interacted with were foundational to my perception of people in Germany and to my positive experience, since they were the few local people that I truly connected with who wanted to learn about my cultural background and share their lives with me. Moreover, it was through them and the support of many people I met that helped me feel comfortable navigating the streets on foot, train or bicycle; having conversations in German with people from all over the world in German or otherwise, and learning more about the beautiful city of Berlin.

While I was abroad, I was never asked in my classes or my program to reflect upon my experiences and to consider them in relationship to previous experiences that I had in the United States. I feel now that such an experience would have been valuable, since it would have required me to put onto paper or computer and organize my thoughts and see how my thoughts, feelings, and actions had shifted over time, as I was certain they had.

When I departed for home, what remained of my time were increasingly faint memories and impressions of my life there, although I continued to take classes at my university. I held fairly intangible ways of thinking about how I had changed as a person, and some vague ideas of what I had learned. I knew that my spoken German had improved and that I could tell you more about German art history and architecture in greater detail, but there were other deeper moments of experience and a sense of ideas and beliefs shifting that I had not captured or documented. This set the basis for my interest in the ways we learn through travel and through organized as well as informal learning experiences. As a student abroad, I felt a sense of purpose that replaced the transience of tourism. The journey not only enhanced my academic and disciplinary knowledge; most of all, it created space for authentic personal connections with people and moments where my deeply held self-understandings and concepts of life were destabilized for the better.

For many undergraduates, time spent traveling and studying abroad may be one of the highlights of a college education. The use of adjectives such as “life-changing” and “transformative” to describe trips abroad of any length is ubiquitous among returning sojourners. Young people today continue to visit foreign countries for many of the same reasons as those who took trips explicitly for learning and personal development purposes in the past. From trade apprenticeships to the Grand Tour, students have many of the same objectives as they did: to learn a foreign language, gain insight into different cultural perspectives, learn skills, and achieve independence. More than ever before, students are sharing their study abroad experiences with friends and family through digitally-mediated communication such as blogging, texting, emailing, or uploading video and photos to social media platforms.

In the process of writing this dissertation, I find myself continually returning to two hypothetical vignettes to illustrate how students might communicate their global travel and study experiences today using digital media. In the first vignette, a study abroad student snaps a selfie in front of the Gaudí Cathedral in Barcelona, uploads the

photograph online with a humorous short caption on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and waits for likes and comments from her friends and family to populate on her profile pages in response to her posting. In the other scenario, the same student is a volunteer online travel correspondent assigned with the task of writing about her experiences for an audience of American middle schoolers. Her final articles are intended for curricular use in a middle school classroom. She first spends time planning and thinking about the topic of her online article, observes some activities near the Gaudí cathedral, takes a photo of it, conducts a little research about its history and architecture, and then begins to write. In the article, she describes her present surroundings in Barcelona, Gaudí's inspiration for the cathedral exterior, and other interesting facts about its construction and local geography. Several photos of Barcelona are included in the final uploaded posting. Some time later, she responds to questions about the article through videoconferencing with the middle school students.

Although the two vignettes need not be mutually exclusive, they represent two qualitatively different ways of representing, communicating, reflecting, and contextualizing global experiences. In this dissertation, I focused on what students learn in the type of structured, pedagogical interaction described in the second vignette, and what they communicated to their audiences, as well as how they communicated. Specifically, I explored how a diverse group of American college students described their experiences and studies while abroad through online interactions and digitally-mediated communication. In the process, I identified the ways they reflected on their intercultural experiences.

As many have noted, relocating to a foreign setting does not automatically guarantee an expanded cultural perspective. A recent piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* painted a portrait of students who were constantly plugged in, busily consuming digital media (Huesca, 2013). Administrators, educators, and researchers have expressed varying concerns that the cultural perspectives of study abroad participants

may remain limited. Study abroad programs may be narrowly delineated by disciplinary bounds or overly focused on the accumulation of “new” experiences without reflecting on their meaning (Lavery & Gaudelli, 2014). A study by Wooley (2013) found that students who communicated extensively with their peers and family members back home through web-based social platforms and online applications did so at the expense of engaging in unfamiliar experiences and challenges. At worst, intercultural experiences may reinforce existing cultural stereotypes or ethnocentric views (Bennett, 1993). Educators emphasize the need for “guidance and systematic strategies to make [students’] months abroad culturally and personally transformative” (Lantz, 1996, p. 98), but the path forward is less clear.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In societies that are increasingly interconnected, problems of global scale require communication and cooperation across geographical and national borders. Rapid advances in digital technologies enable instantaneous interactions with individuals from all over the world and access to a wide range of mass media and informational resources. Knowledge of local and global issues, collaboration with diverse groups, cultural awareness and sensitivity, and intercultural experiences are dimensions of global and intercultural competence valued by employers and high priorities for national K-12 and higher educational policy agendas (Balistreri, Di Giacomo, Noisette, & Ptak, 2012; Reimers, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The ability to recognize different perspectives and communicate in a respectful, open, and well-informed way is arguably invaluable in all spheres of life.

Historically, institutions of higher education have prepared students to address global problems and challenges through study abroad programs that connect students to people, resources, and activities beyond the bounds of national classrooms (Stearns, 2009). In the context of this research, study abroad is defined as a program enabling “U.S. citizens and permanent residents [to receive] academic credit at their U.S. home institution for study in another country” (Chow, 2010). While the proportion of students who participate in study abroad programs is still small (less than 10% of the total college population), the past decade has seen growth of over 150%, with 289,000 students

traveling in 2013-2014 (Institute of International Education, 2017). Students continue to seek life-changing and transformative intercultural experiences, spurred in part by policy initiatives from the federal government, aggressive higher education recruiting and marketing strategies, and positive self-reported accounts from other student travelers, including friends and family members. In the United States, policymakers and university administrators have historically encouraged undergraduates to pursue academic study abroad experiences for a wide range of reasons: to enhance geographic and cultural knowledge; learn about different perspectives; improve intercultural communication and language skills; and support area studies expertise (Council on the International Educational Exchange [CIEE], 1988; Hoffa, 2007; Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006). Other rationales for study abroad education are more moral in tone, as educators seek to help facilitate study abroad experiences to be meaningful beyond an individualistic sense, and to help students to cultivate moral sensibilities of obligation to others, a sense of social justice and action in their local communities and beyond, and a critical sense of identity.

The “experiential” factor of studying abroad is frequently cited as one of the most important dimensions contributing to positive student learning outcomes, as students are seemingly placed in opportunities and situations where they can apply their learning to real-life contexts. A common assumption of studying abroad is the idea that through cultural immersion in places distanced from “home,” participants will gain crucial skills, talents, dispositions, and values associated with improved intercultural sensitivity, world-mindedness, and global and intercultural competence (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). However, study abroad programs frequently include hybrid second language immersion and English language courses and the high likelihood, if not fact, of students’ regular interactions with other program and international students. Warnings abound that travel experiences in and of themselves may not lead to radical shifts in perception (Patterson, 2013; Talburt, 2009; Zemach-Bersin, 2006), and educators have expressed fears that

students may return to their home communities having failed to critically examine their experiences against their existing knowledge and cultural beliefs. Some studies have indicated that students do not know how to talk about their experiences other than by using the generic and clichéd language of transformation and development; in other words, there are concerns that they do not know how to articulate their experiences and therefore may not have truly engaged in potential opportunities for intercultural learning offered abroad (Dunkley, 2009; Forsey, Broomhall, & Davis, 2011; Root & Ngampornchai, 2012). Other potential problems with studying abroad include students' limited interaction with host nationals, the persistence of stereotypes and ethnocentric perspectives, and disconnected, ambiguously educational experiences characterizing poorly designed programs (Downey & Grey, 2012; Wagner & Magistrale, 1995; Whitney & Clayton, 2011).

In light of these concerns, researchers have recommended the practice of reflection, particularly in written form, as a valuable pedagogical and curricular tool to help students evaluate challenges faced in daily intercultural interactions, develop their critical faculties, and learn to identify and examine different perspectives, including their own normative cultural lenses (Chen, 2002; Jackson, 2005; Lavery & Gaudelli, 2015; Rodriguez, 2006). The practice of cultivating reflective thought, famously defined by John Dewey (1997), may be understood as the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 5). Written reflection can take many forms, from freeform journaling, to writing from prompts, to more intensive training in ethnographic methods and analysis resulting in field journals and larger research projects examining student positionality in depth. Written reflection goes a step further than description or comparison—it involves recognizing one's positionality, making connections to theories and concepts, and synthesizing existing knowledge and experience into new ideas. For Whitney and Clayton (2011), critical reflection denotes

the opposite of navel-gazing, introspective detachment; it is a dynamic relationship between thinking and doing, a “process of metacognition that functions to improve the quality of thought and of action and the relationship between them” (p. 150).

Reflection upon experiences is to some extent represented as a rhetorical counterpart to concerns that students are distracted, flitting from experience to experience without any sort of recollection, or remaining in a bubble-like university environment, as they continually interact with their home cultures through information and communications technologies (ICTs) and social media platforms (Engle & Engle, 2013; Huesca, 2013). In contrast to the relative isolation and disconnection from their homes that previous travelers might have experienced, students today navigate spaces that are no longer total immersion environments and completely separate from their lives. One example of this may be students sharing their study abroad experiences with friends and family through the digitally-mediated, communicative practices of blogging, texting, emailing, or uploading video and photos to social media platforms. Compared to prior generations, or even their counterparts in the earlier part of the 21st century, study abroad students are intensely connected to their friends and family online through emailing, videoconferencing, texting, blogging, and other computer-mediated interactions (Coleman & Chafer, 2008; Kinginger, 2008; Kinginger & Belz, 2005; Mikal & Grace, 2011; Wooley, 2013). A Google search for “study abroad blogs,” for instance, returned 11,800,000 results, and “study abroad social media” 16,000,000 queries. Arguments have been made that constant access to information and communication technologies may limit the depth and breadth of students’ experiences, with students choosing to remain connected to their friends and family at the expense of interacting with people outside of intercultural contexts that are familiar (Kinger, 2008).

However, empirical data in educational research also suggest that the guided use of digital media and carefully designed global education curricula may benefit the development of students’ intercultural and global competencies, specifically in the areas

of communication and critical reflection. Educators in K-12 and institutions of higher learning have facilitated online exchanges using videoconferencing, social media platforms, and blogging applications between students in geographically distant contexts, with reported outcomes in increased engagement and critical self-reflection (Anderson & Rourke, 2005; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; O'Brien & Eriksson, 2008; Patterson, Carrillo, & Salinas, 2011). In several studies, globally-oriented curriculum centered around an intercultural, interactive component between study abroad students and distant peers helped both groups to communicate and reflect upon their interactions and normative cultural and national assumptions (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Lee, 2011; Vande Berg, 2007). For the purposes of this dissertation, culture is understood as a way of life shared by a group with accepted values, beliefs, experiences, and practices that have been produced and reproduced over time, with flexibility to change (Corder & Meyerhoff, 2009; LeCompte & Schensul, 2010).

Online reflection through blogging is one avenue that educators have sought in other learning contexts to support student learning. Scholarly investigations of student writing and travel are still infrequent in the literature, and audience has emerged as an important factor in the ways that students represent their experiences. For instance, Snee (2014) found that young people who took a gap year to travel around the world and blog about their experiences to friends and family constructed their journeys as investments and performances of social capital. They were minimally self-critical and implicating of their roles as privileged travelers. In another study, Pitman (2013) characterized college students' semesters abroad as perceiving to learn from writing, but they were minimally "reflecting" on their experiences—that is to say, their writing did not move away from anecdotal or descriptive text toward more abstract conceptualization where they considered the overall meaning of their journeys, and did not actively consider multiple perspectives, or think about their learning experiences as much as they described specific anecdotes or stories, or feelings.

The challenge for educators and researchers, then, is to understand how students reflect upon their experiences in a globalized, digital context; to assist them with the process of making meaning from intercultural experience and observations during study abroad, and understand the types of narratives that students create. Without opportunities for critical reflection, cultural assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices may be produced or reinforced when students return and share their experiences with their home communities and global audiences, both in person and online (Downey & Grey, 2012; Wagner & Magistrale, 1995).

Problem Statement

As a means of facilitating deeper, more engaged forms of learning, reflecting upon one's experience has been frequently recommended in study abroad research literature as a way for students to process their experiences and to critically analyze their perspectives (Snee, 2014, p. 184). According to Rodriguez (2006),

Students' multiple acts of representation become especially significant since perhaps even more than anthropologists, students "take home the news" to a segment of the population that might not normally hear about such things. They thus play a role of public intellectual in a more intense, less elitist sense than most anthropologists usually do. And one could argue that representing exotic cultures to such characters as the roommate who hates travel, or the ever-so-slightly racist grandfather, may indeed do more to change the status quo than flashy academic publications and presentations. (p. 2)

However, merely writing about one's experiences is not an indicator of deep reflection, just as one's experience with traveling is not isomorphic with global competence, intercultural sensitivity, or world-mindedness. Educators must better understand how students communicate about their experiences while they are abroad and how they reflect upon their learning in writing. We are only beginning to investigate the relationship between student learning, travel, reflection, communication of travel experience, and

interconnectivity. Beyond simply recommending written reflection as a pedagogical tool and ongoing practice to enhance student learning, educators are beginning to explore how participants are writing about their experiences. Some questions to consider include observing whether students are engaging in surface or deeper, critical reflection; evaluating whether or not there are main narratives that surface across all student reflections; and expanding the reach of investigation to look at demographic diversity and non-traditional student groups.

On the one hand, it has been argued that constant access to information and communication technologies may limit the depth of intercultural and study abroad experiences, and do little to change preconceived ideas of life for students living and studying in host countries, since students may choose to remain connected to their friends and family. On the other hand, research suggests that scaffolded opportunities to communicate and interrogate intercultural experiences may contribute to the development of cultural awareness, reflection, and sensitivity to individual cultural perspectives for students learning and living abroad (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Lee, 2011). Further investigations are needed to understand how students communicate and reflect upon their experiences in programs with an online and global curricular component (Lee, 2011; Lewin, 2009; Ogden, 2005; Vande Berg, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

To date, learning outcomes of studying abroad are frequently measured using standardized surveys and scales assessing pre- and post-change using generic constructs such as cultural shock, intercultural communicative competence, intercultural competence, and intercultural sensitivity (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanot, & Klute, 2012). Insofar as these types of studies offered limited insight into processes of student learning, this study explored the contextual, narrative aspects of communication and reflection that

shaped students' individual experiences and journeys, and the social and processual dimensions of their experiences. Investigations of writings in situ can provide insight as to how students might approach intercultural experiences similarly or differently, and how they make meaning from their travel narratives. To date, students' written reflection using digitally-mediated communication and in blogging and other online contexts has been minimally investigated. There are few examples of what this looks like in practice for students studying abroad and as such practices might be oriented toward different audiences and perspectives, a particularly important issue in current interconnected digital and physical contexts. The purpose of my study was to address these concerns and to explore the ways a group of undergraduates living and learning abroad wrote about their study abroad experiences in an online pedagogical context for an authentic home (U.S.-based) audience.

Brief Description of the Study

Through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and surveys, and content analysis of online articles and audio-recordings of videoconferences, my qualitative study explored the ways in which undergraduate students communicated their study abroad experiences using online digital media as volunteer travel correspondents for a semester-long global education program. The participants were college students who volunteered to write about their experiences in a centralized, online blogging platform and videoconference with classroom audiences of disadvantaged youth in elementary and middle schools based in the United States. The partnership between the college students and the younger students was facilitated through a global education nonprofit organization with a self-described mission to engage youth with global topics, cultivate interest in attending college, and encourage aspirations to study abroad.

I also examined how the study abroad participants' interactions and reflections were scaffolded through a global education curriculum with a cosmopolitan orientation. The curriculum in question adopted a cosmopolitan approach to global education by situating global dynamics and culture within diverse, lived social realities, supporting ideas of shared humanity, the production of hybrid, transcultural, and transnational identities, and sustained dialogue and collaboration rather than skill mastery (Appiah, 2006; Gaudelli, 2009; Hansen, 2010; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Nussbaum, 1998). Beginning with the question, "How does where we live shape how we live?" the study abroad students created curricular content focusing on cultural, geographic, social, economic, and other dimensions of their travel and study experience for their classroom audiences based in the United States. After receiving initial training and support from the global education program staff on how to write for an elementary and secondary school audience, they were required to author and post online at least two out of three different types of written documents per week for the duration of a single academic semester. Logbooks were 300-600 word, short answer responses to questions about travel, nature, and personal news, while journal articles were 500-700 word, short essays writing in first-person narrative on topics such as the participant's autobiography, reasons for studying abroad, experiences in the country, recognition of different perspectives, or comparing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning in one's home versus host country. Field notes were 500-700 word entries and an additional article type where participants responded to topical questions and embedded sub-questions on food, transportation, nature, daily life, and the environment. The group also uploaded related photos and occasionally video clips of their experiences. While abroad, they worked remotely with volunteer editors and classroom interns based in the United States and participated in online videoconferences at least 1 or more times a semester with their respective matched classrooms (Appendix H). According to Gaudelli (2009), cosmopolitan heuristics of a global curriculum are characterized by "a robust notion of

democracy, coupled with a transcendent view of citizenship, and emergent views of identity” (p. 76). Based on its model of linking college students in different countries to elementary and middle school students in the United States, the curriculum and program in question was focused on the instruction, presentation, and representation of culture with a global and cosmopolitan orientation, rather than an intra-national, multicultural orientation.

Research Questions

The inquiry was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do students reflect in writing upon their study abroad experiences to diverse audiences in an online pedagogical context?
2. What types of study abroad experiences do students reflect on in an online (pedagogical) context?
3. How does an online pedagogical context shape the ways that students represent their study abroad experiences to diverse audiences?
4. To what extent does pedagogically-oriented writing support deep levels of reflection while students study abroad?

Significance

This study contributes to ongoing discussions in policy and practice regarding global citizenship and intercultural education, travel and privilege, and improving the conditions for learning while abroad. More narrowly, it looks at learning through the practice of written reflection. There is a need for empirically based research to continue to examine the content of student communication to different audiences while abroad, and how these ideas operate in context. As American students travel all over the world, it

is valuable to improve our understanding of how students learn from their experiences, particularly as they communicate about their daily lives abroad to their peers, families, and online audiences. This study looks at how students represent culturally different others in their writing, how they relate to their new surroundings, and how they describe their travels within a larger global context.

Educators and students can also benefit from a deeper understanding of how participants communicate their in situ experiences to native audiences, and secondarily, how the use of digital media and structured programs can support student learning while abroad. A wholesale ban on students' use of digital tools while abroad would be pedagogically ineffective and unenforceable outside of the classroom context, particularly when the majority of "learning" is presumed to occur while studying abroad (Huesca, 2013). This study investigates the assumption that travel necessarily leads to expanded worldviews and increased cultural sensitivity, and that the use of digital media to reach audiences in home communities while studying abroad detracts from learning. Although there are a number of small qualitative studies of student reflection during the study abroad experience through journals and letter writing (Benda, 2010; Chen, 2002; Cranshaw & Callen, 2001; Jackson, 2005; Ogden, 2005; Rodriguez, 2006), the majority of these studies were conducted prior to the advent of Web 2.0 and interactive tools, and thus do not examine the impact of delivering curriculum through interactive Web technologies and digital media. My study addressed these gaps in the research by exploring both the processes and written products of student reflection by college students studying abroad.

Finally, this study is situated in a critical historic phase of study abroad programs and education abroad where it becomes increasingly recognized that there are fewer distinctions between host and home locales due to the effects of globalizing processes, and there are increasingly diverse populations traveling abroad. There are studies with larger sample sizes of study abroad students numbering in the hundreds, but frequently

these studies represent students attending the same public university, students that are ethnically homogenous or represent the majority population studying abroad (White, female student attending a liberal arts college).

One contribution that this particular study offers for research literature is diversity in student demographics, including diversity in ethnicity, economic status, and range of colleges and universities represented, and in the location of participants' study abroad programs. Findings may be transferable to situations facing educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in examining the diverse perspectives and salient experiences of students living and learning abroad for a semester and the cultivation of reflection in digitally-mediated contexts. In the present policy environment, evidence-based qualitative research can assist efforts to support study abroad and global education programs and improve our understanding of concepts of reflection and intercultural learning, further discussed in the next chapter.

Dissertation Overview

The dissertation is structured as follows. In Chapter I, I introduced the background, problem, research questions, purpose, and significance of the study. In Chapter II, I briefly outline the project of study abroad education as an educational policy goal and administrative and curriculum direction for institutions of higher education in the United States. I then bring together literature from theories of intercultural communication and education, empirical studies of study abroad research, and the practice of written reflection, and make the case that the theory of cosmopolitan communication offers a unique and different way of thinking about the phenomenon of communicating one's experiences while studying abroad than previous theories emphasizing communication as a skill or outcome. In Chapter III, I explain the rationale for the qualitative case study methodology and methods used in the study, and describe how data were collected and

analyzed. I also include my reflections on the ethical implications of the research and provide basic demographic information of the larger group whose writings were analyzed as well as the smaller set of key informants that were interviewed.

Each of the next three chapters explores a specific dimension of students' writing of their experiences. Collectively, they respond to the research questions that framed this study, wherein the questions guided the analysis and provided the foundation on which the thematic data chapters were constructed. Thus, instead of each findings chapter corresponding to any single research question, taken together the chapters offer insights into the topics that the questions raise.

In Chapter IV, I describe how the curriculum ascribed a generic identity of traveler to the participants and how the participants themselves expanded upon this identity by contextualizing their travels within their life journeys and positioning themselves as advocates for learning through traveling. In Chapter V, I examine how the participants communicated to their distant audiences from a place I identify as "cosmopolitan openness" and describe how they wrote about their surroundings and relationships from a perspective of curiosity, warmth, and connectedness. Chapter VI then explores another way participants communicated about their experiences, specifically through the concept of reflection and critical observation, and the ways participants identified how they changed.

The final chapter synthesizes conclusions that emerged from the findings of this study and presents implications for curricular practice and research, paying attention to the affordances and limitations of the curriculum that was studied and the critiques of cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework. It also provides recommendations for pedagogical and curricular design for written reflection in study abroad education, in addition to offering directions for future research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research of student learning in study abroad programs is an emerging, interdisciplinary research field with broad scope, intersecting with national political history, educational psychology, cultural anthropology, communication studies, travel and tourism studies, intercultural education, and numerous other areas. Given the present study's focus on intercultural learning and reflection, I have chosen to organize this review into specific themes to contextualize my research.

At the outset of the review, I introduce the project of study abroad (SA) education briefly as a programmatic endeavor and goal of higher education and government policy in the United States. Immediately following, I address how *communication* has been theorized in study abroad research and in educational contexts, excluding research on second language learning in SA contexts, which is outside the scope of the study. As will be shown, communication has primarily been theorized in study abroad research from an “intercultural” perspective where “particular kind[s] of interaction or communication [occur] among people, one in which differences in cultures plays a role.” (Bennett, 2012, p. 91). These perspectives view communication as part of students' intercultural development and valorize the idea that pedagogical interventions can help to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and skills while abroad.

The second theme and section in the literature review addresses *writing as the form of communication that is the basis of this research* and *reflection* as a process through

which students capture parts of their experience and engage with the substance of intercultural learning. This study addresses digitally-mediated communication, a form of communication that includes spoken and written language mediated through electronic technologies such as online weblogging, videoconferencing, and Internet phone calling, or through social networking and social media platforms. This study agrees with Nancy Baym's (2011) argument that digitally-mediated communication is not an impoverished form of face-to-face communication or a space distinct from everyday reality; rather, "mediated communication ... is an additional tool people use to connect, one which can only be understood as deeply embedded in and influenced by the daily realities of embodied life" (p. 152). I engage with the existing empirical literature on written reflection, pedagogy, and studying abroad in international contexts outside the United States, and look at different ways that researchers and educators have conceptualized writing and reflection as tools for facilitating aspects of intercultural learning.

In the final section of the literature review, the theme of communication feeds back into the study's conceptual framework, which ties several ideas together—namely, the context of study abroad programs, the practice of written reflection, and communicating about intercultural experiences through a lens for thinking about student communication while abroad. Specifically, the lens of "cosmopolitan communication" is explored as a framework for understanding student learning and reflection. Cosmopolitan communication is defined as

a world- and Other-oriented practice of engaging in deliberate, dialogic, critical, non-coercive and ethical communication. Through the play of context-specific dialectics, cosmopolitan communication works with and through cultural differences and historical and emerging power inequities to achieve ongoing understanding, intercultural growth, mutuality, collaboration and social and global justice goals through critical self-transformation. (Sobré-Denton & Bardhan, 2013, p. 172)

Cosmopolitan communication emphasizes the relationality between communicants and their audience. Unlike studies of intercultural communication that have explored

students' ideas of culture and difference from fixed ideas of national identity, the focus of this study is concerned with the communication of experience and learning that is more complex, less essentializing, and inclusive of discussions of national identity, global and local relationships, cultural difference, and ideas of belonging. Cosmopolitan communication is performative, involving critical interrogation and the potential for transformation of the self. It includes what educational philosopher David Hansen (2010) describes as "reflective openness to the new and reflective loyalty to the known" (p. 1). It is a form of communication that finds ways to connect across differences without minimizing them and considers the relationality of difference. Based on an analysis of empirical research, history, and theory in the above themes, I argue in this literature review that there is a need for a qualitative study that looks at study abroad students' writing and reflection through the lens of cosmopolitan theory, specifically cosmopolitan communication.

Background

The practice of institutionalized, educational group travel sanctioned by the government and American colleges and universities is fairly recent, dating back to the late 19th century and gaining momentum after World War II. In America, Hoffa (2007) traces the lineage of study abroad to the *wanderjahr* and the Grand Tour, and later to institutionalized efforts such as Junior Year Abroad, faculty-led short-term programs, and government-led cultural exchanges such as the federally funded Fulbright scholarship programs or Peace Corps/VISTA service programs. After the first two World Wars, knowledge of geopolitically important areas, language skills, and international policy and affairs became national educational policy priorities. The establishment of organizations such as Institute for International Education, the Council for International Educational Exchange, NAFSA, and the Forum for Education Abroad also led to the creation of study

abroad programs, funding for traveling and learning abroad, and the establishment of institutional learning standards, frequently shaping policy and research agendas to serve government and economic goals.

In recent years, students have been urged to study abroad for many reasons, some of which overlap with the goals of their sponsoring institutions and U.S. government policy agendas. Frequently, study abroad programs are designed and marketed to present students with learning opportunities outside of formal classroom contexts, which may include the practice of language skills, for instance, in authentic contexts. Other reasons that students travel abroad to study include working with local communities to learn about different knowledge contexts, such as different approaches and techniques in science, medicine, or other areas of study, and also to contribute to total and holistic self-development, a goal of many institutions of higher education and liberal arts curricula.

According to Rundstrom Williams (2005), “only recently has study abroad begun to be seen with a much broader scope, as an educational experience impacting individuals’ psychological and social development and valuable to a majority, rather than a minority, of students” (p. 20). One area that has grown in importance is intercultural learning, defined as “the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different from their own” (Lane, 2012, p. 1618). Bennett (2012) describes intercultural learning as a form of “generalizable ... competence that can be applied to dealing with cross-cultural contact in general, not just skills for dealing with a particular other culture” (p. 91), while Vande Berg et al. (2012) stress that intercultural learning is perhaps the most important dimension of the study abroad experience because “nearly everything students learn abroad is informed by the way they frame their new cultural contexts within which they find themselves” (pp. xiii-xiv). Within this broad notion of intercultural learning are assumptions that students must learn how to communicate across cultural difference or learn to identify differences to facilitate understanding, and that educators can achieve

such goals through educational intervention through training, preparation, coursework, and other forms. In this light, the advent of digital technologies, the Internet, and World Wide Web only furthers the need for sensitivity and understanding across cultural difference, as certain voices and perspectives are amplified and others minimized or even extinguished.

Disciplinary Influences

Intercultural learning's prominence in study abroad education was greatly influenced by two related disciplines—anthropology and intercultural communication (La Brack & Brathurst, 2012). In the academic study of anthropology, Franz Boas led the epistemological and methodological shift in the early 20th century away from normative ideas of a natural cultural hierarchy differentiating cultures toward notions of cultural relativism and evaluating cultural organization from its own terms and internal systems. The discipline of intercultural communication came into existence in the 1950s, when Edward T. Hall, an anthropologist in the United States Foreign Service, searched for practical methods to help public servants interact in unfamiliar cultural environments. He created culture-general categories and factors, such as high and low context cultures, high territorial and low territorial cultures, and the sense of polychronic/monochronic time, to navigate communication scenarios (La Brack & Brathurst, 2012). These concepts were used to train and guide the interactions of foreign service workers, and later influenced a generation of intercultural communication theorists and trainers who sought to apply his ideas in business and educational contexts. Intercultural communication emerged as a field of study from the work of researchers that studied differences in communication patterns between two culturally diverse groups. Historically, the research literature of intercultural communication examined how to prepare individuals for effective communication between groups with one possible goal of mitigating or diminishing misunderstanding. Although a complete discussion of the intersection of these two

disciplines is not possible in the scope of this dissertation, the following distinction is important as a reference point for study abroad researchers: anthropological perspectives focus on deep learning of culture through cultural embeddedness within an “immersion” paradigm and being a participant-observer of a culture (La Brack & Brathurst, 2012). In this paradigm, deep cultural knowledge and immersion enable effective interaction and communication.

By contrast, intercultural communication perspectives focus on cultural-general skills, attitudes, and cognitive frameworks that then make in-depth understanding and knowledge of another culture possible. The goals of study abroad from an intercultural communication perspective include “acquisition and refinement of general intercultural skills (competencies) that facilitate interaction ... the level of analysis and effective functioning in cultural context” (La Brack & Brathurst, 2012, pp. 206-208), while making in-depth cultural knowledge a secondary or subsidiary goal of learning.

Training has multiple goals: (1) “to provide cognitive frameworks that facilitate empathic interpretations of communication behavior in intercultural interactions; (2) assist students in generating culturally appropriate behavior, informing them of conflict styles and contrasting values; (3) provide emotional support so that effective communication can occur” (La Brack & Brathurst, 2012, pp. 206-207).

Both perspectives have informed learning goals in the study abroad context, some of which include the possession of a deep knowledge of culture; skills and behaviors in interacting with culturally different others with appropriate behavior; and holding empathic, curious, and self-aware attitudes. La Brack and Bathurst (2012) posit that the two perspectives are complementary and support student learning in different ways. However, to an extent, there is tension existing between these two different perspectives of communication, learning, and culture—one perspective where communication is not considered from an interactional, outcomes-oriented perspective but rather from the perspective of having deep cultural knowledge.

Intercultural Learning

In educational research and study abroad contexts, intercultural learning and reflection is approached from developmental, experiential, and transformative learning perspectives, frequently supported by the work of learning theorists and psychologists David Kolb and Jack Mezirow. In Kolb's theory and model of experiential learning, learning occurs as individuals process their experiences and form conceptualizations that are then applied to authentic contexts, tested, and re-constructed (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemlis, 2000). Mezirow (1991; Mezirow & Associates, 2000) theorized that transformative learning and ideas of expanded consciousness in psychological and behavioral domains, including transformations in one's self-concept, occurred in the context of challenging crises and could be aided through the analytical, rational process of reflection.

According to Perry and Southwell (2011), intercultural learning includes cognition and affective skills, specifically skills in the experience of cultural difference, while competence also includes ideas of communication and behavior. Theories of development of intercultural competence, communication, and sensitivity have also privileged ideas of change, include attitudinal, conceptual, and behavioral shifts away from ethnocentric perspectives that shun cultural difference or privilege familiar cultural perspectives, toward the acceptance of the validity of different perspectives and finally integration or synthesis of cultural differences into one's everyday interactions and worldviews (Bennett, 1993). Several models of intercultural learning, intercultural competence, intercultural communication competence, and intercultural sensitivity dominate study abroad research literature and practice. They are further explicated below.

Intercultural Competence, Sensitivity, and Communication Defined

Intercultural competence is defined as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and awareness to interact effectively with people from other cultures (Deardorff, 2004). Deardorff

constructed two models of intercultural competence, including a pyramid model consisting of four dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. Attitudes of openness and curiosity form the base of the pyramid and the foundation for the other dimensions, which included knowledge of others and self in the form of cultural self-awareness. Cognitive and communicative skills are also included in the model, including evaluating, listening, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, and relating. The model was later adapted into a process model intended to be a less linear way of conceptualizing understanding cultural difference and to accommodate learners' entry into any part of the four connected dimensions and to continue to develop iteratively and experientially toward increased competence. Byram's (1977) model of intercultural communication competence, another common model and instrument for evaluating intercultural learning in study abroad literature, resembles Deardorff's model in its inclusion of intercultural and communicative competence. The intercultural competence component of Byram's model includes intercultural knowledge, skills, and attributes, and the following five values: intercultural attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The component of communicative competence includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence.

Intercultural communication has frequently been analyzed as a complementary or subcharacteristic of both intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity, although all three concepts have overlaps. As mentioned in the earlier section on the disciplinary roots of intercultural communication, the actual activity is identified with interactional contexts and how cultural differences can create problems in interpretation, meaning, and expectations. According to Lustig and Koester (2006), it is difficult to know if intercultural communication competence is transferable across contexts and specific to a situation and the association between individuals rather than specific to individual traits. However, researchers have identified some traits associated with communication

competence, including adaptability (moving through the acculturation process) and sensitivity, empathy, motivation, a global attitude, management of psychological stress, accommodation of new ideas, flexibility, open-mindedness, the ability to listen well, and personal strength (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Rundstrom Williams (2005) summarized these traits as:

1. flexibility and openmindedness
2. cultural empathy and nonjudgmental perceptiveness; observing and reacting through sensitivity
3. personal strength and stability, autonomy and motivation, and grounding a cultural reality
4. resourcefulness and ability to deal with stress (p. 359).

These traits are conceptualized along cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. As Rundstrom Williams describes, “effective intercultural communicators must have an understanding of cultural communication differences, an ability to overcome those barriers, and a desire to use those skills” (p. 359). A related model common in intercultural learning literature with a slightly different emphasis is Bennett’s Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which examines individual identity in relation to the affective, subjective experience of intercultural difference. In Bennett’s original model (1993), intercultural sensitivity was characterized as a developmental trajectory with six stages. The scale begins with three ethnocentric perspectives: denial of difference, defense of difference, minimization of difference, and ends in three increasingly ethnorelative stages, from the acceptance of difference, adaptation, and finally integration of cultural difference. The goal for educators is moving students toward the latter three stages of increasing awareness of and (positive) sensitivity to cultural difference.

Each of these facets of intercultural learning—intercultural competence, sensitivity, and communication (competence) —emphasizes a developmental and transformative

trajectory. The models emphasize that students may already have some of these skills and traits prior to arrival; however, one cannot operate under the assumption that intercultural immersion alone can contribute to the growth in these areas. The use of pedagogy, training, and other forms of support has been recommended to create conditions where intercultural competence or sensitivity can grow and learning can occur. Based on these constructs, researchers and educators have sought to develop these knowledge, skills, and attitudes in study abroad students.

A criticism of intercultural instruction is that it serves to further reinforce ideas of difference and cultural stereotypes (Dervin, 2010). However, it has also been argued that intercultural instruction may provide necessary context and support for students who might otherwise fail to critically reflect on their own and different cultures. Forsey, Broomhall, and Davis (2011), for example, surveyed 219 Australian students who had studied abroad and asked them to describe and summarize what they had learned. They found that, although students wrote about having a broader mindset after studying abroad, they were unable to describe their learning beyond common clichés that travel opened their minds, was entertaining, and that they had the most of their experience. Participants could only describe superficially what they learned about culture in terms of external, visible differences. Ironically, a number of students described how they felt more “global” than individuals from other countries based on their experiences, while simultaneously characterizing Australians as more “global” in comparison to Japanese and American people. Dunkley (2009) also interviewed participants who studied abroad and found that they were unable to articulate what they had learned. Through interviews, she found that they articulated understanding of cultural differences and an understanding of their own cultural identity; however, she did not find any evidence of growing global-mindedness or an increased sense of social responsibility.

From these studies, it can be seen that exploring intercultural learning while studying abroad is a complex process involving many different vectors of student

experience, development, and potential forms of intervention. Insofar as it may be difficult to know the type and features of intercultural learning that are occurring during the duration of studying abroad, pedagogical intervention in the form of instructor-guided written reflection has been recommended during students' journeys. What follows is a brief summary of guiding definitions of reflection in education, its role in study abroad education, and analysis of the pedagogical practice and activity of reflection and writing as a means of developing student intercultural learning while abroad.

Reflection

As Bagnall (2005) writes, “educators have long been concerned with critical reflection—where questioning the assumptions and structure of situations leads to new visions and views, which provide both the basis and motivation for changed behaviour” (p. 108). Integrative experiences and opportunities for guided reflection through discussion and writing have been frequently implemented in pedagogy and curriculum in study abroad education (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Wagner & Magistrale, 1995). Classic theorizations of thinking, experience, and reflection in the vein of John Dewey and David Kolb connected reflection as a process of thinking that informs future decision-making and guides actions and experiences based on interpreting past experiences.

Broadly, in educational research and theory, the study of reflection has been theorized as a process within the structure of experiential learning including embodied activity and the recall of events. The concept of reflection itself may refer to a cognitive process of linking the experience of an event with its purposeful recall and evaluation, and interpretation that may occur before, during, or after an event or activity (Kolb et al., 2000). Recent research has sought to include affective and developmental components in the process of reflection and argued for the need to evaluate it as embedded within social

context. For Whitney and Clayton (2011), critical reflection denotes the opposite of navel-gazing, introspective detachment; it is a dynamic relationship between thinking and doing, a “process of metacognition that functions to improve the quality of thought and of action and the relationship between them” (p. 150). Reflection is framed, in the context of pedagogy, as a deliberate means of prompting student recall of experience and organizing thought, and documenting descriptions of affect. From an instructional design perspective, reflection may be structured to include group and individual viewpoints, asynchronous or synchronous interaction, and written or verbal discourse. Rogers (2001) further differentiates between reflection “in the moment” and “after the fact,” noting that many studies utilize journaling as a method for reflection.

In the study abroad context, journals have been highly recommended as learning and assessment tools to assist students with the process of seeing their own intercultural change and to help educators see a demonstration of intercultural learning in situ. The assignment of student writing in journals is widely perceived as a pedagogical and curricular vehicle for students to see the connections between their actions, behaviors, and motivations, particularly in a study abroad context where students are experiencing many feelings and potentially unfamiliar interactions or applying their knowledge in authentic situations. Wagner and Magistrale (1995) recommend that students write about their experiences in order to explore assumptions that they may have made that they view differently over time. By writing about their travels in journals, researchers argue that students can potentially identify issues of power and privilege, and help them see how they construct social and cultural norms, as they evaluate through comparing and contrasting. As forms of affective support, journals can also help students process the challenges they experience in learning to adapt and navigate confusing situations and emotions whose meaning may not become clear until later.

In order to help students write in a way that prompts thinking through their experiences, educators have created structures and schemas for helping them to scaffold

their writing, including the utilization of mnemonic devices as tools to help students reflect in their writing. Rundstrom Williams (2013) created the LENS heuristic to help students look at a complex situation they did not understand and unpack its implications. The LENS heuristic and acronym exercise asked students to “Look Objectively, Examine Your Assumptions, Note Other Possibilities, and Substantiate with Locals” in writing and then evaluate their cultural biases and existing perceptions, and explore in greater detail how their interpretations came to be and how a local person’s reasoning or value system might lead to a different conclusion. This heuristic was developed based on Kolb’s theory of experiential learning, and each part of the heuristic mapped onto specific parts of the model, including having concrete experiences, reflecting and observing one’s experience, pulling together an abstracted understanding of one’s experience, and using it to inform possible future experiences. Ash and Clayton (2009) created another heuristic, the DEAL model—Describe, Experience, and Articulate Learning—to facilitate critical reflection in the process of experiential learning. In their model, students work with continuous feedback from instructors, exploring dimensions of their learning by first describing their experiences objectively and then responding to prompts connecting their experiences to specific categories, including personal growth, civic engagement, and academic enhancement. Finally, students respond to questions about the meaning of their learning and how their interpretations might inform future experiences.

While some researchers offer tools for structuring student writing to enhance intercultural learning in the attempt to help students move from ethnocentric perspectives to more integrated ones, others use similar frameworks for analyzing student reflection. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) suggest that well-designed reflection meets the following criteria: it links experience to learning, is guided, occurs regularly, involves feedback to the learner to enhance the learning, and helps clarify values. Bagnall (2005), for example, adapted a three-tiered model for analyzing writing in a study abroad context. The levels of student writing included culturally descriptive reflection, which makes basic

comparisons and observations. By comparison, culturally dialogic reflection questions one's cultural norms. Culturally critical reflection is the most advanced level of writing and includes synthesizing one's existing ideas of culture with new information and using this to question one's behavior, attitudes, or relationships. As can be seen, these pedagogical ways of considering reflection focus on distinguishing descriptive and explanatory writing from writing with a more interrogative and self-critical lens for thinking about cultural difference and awareness of one's own culture.

Empirical Research

According to Benda (2010), writing is a place of discovery, exploration, and synthesis where students can examine representations of the self and Other. The act and process of writing becomes a vehicle of reflection, and a site where dimensions of intercultural learning can be shaped. The following section reviews empirical research of writing and reflection in study abroad contexts. These studies may be organized across multiple axes, including studies with or without a digital, interactive component; and studies where writing is situated in a structured pedagogical context, such as a classroom, or as free journals or blogs generated independently of an instructor or classroom setting. Another axis includes consideration of written content and pedagogical context, where, on one end, writing is oriented more toward ethnography, thick description, and embedding oneself in a cultural context to learn about phenomena from an insider perspective, while the other end of the writing axis explores intercultural perspectives that are comparative and focused on adaptation, accommodation, and understanding of cultural difference. The common assumption across all of these studies, disparate as they might be, is that students' writings are accurate reflections of their experiences.

Findings from several studies of free writing support claims that without pedagogical intervention to shape intercultural learning, students may lack critical cultural awareness and the ability to reflect more deeply upon their experiences (Forsey

et al., 2011). Root and Ngampornchai (2012) examined students' essays of their education abroad experience to evaluate their intercultural competence and found that students' accounts showed "only superficial levels of intercultural understanding ... they did not connect surface-level cultural norms with deeper values and cultural assumptions" (p. 524). Students wrote about differences they had observed, but they did not make connections between the underlying values, worldviews, and normative ideas of culture. The authors recommended pre-departure and post-departure programs of instruction to help students understand their own cultural identities and positioning; and preparation to help them become better acquainted with social identities of race, gender, ethnicity, class, and language; as well as issues of perspective and privilege. They also recommended instruction in culture-general frameworks that might better support students' understanding of differences in observed cultural contexts.

Pitman (2013) explored student blogs as documentation of the effects of studying abroad and found nine major themes of learning in students' writing: culture, food, travel, transportation, language, academics, people, reflection, and what she called an acknowledgment of learning. She compared the content across student blogs and differentiated between descriptive and reflective writing by characterizing reflective writing as the act of students' meaning making from past experiences. While the students' writings demonstrated that they were meeting some of the university's education abroad objectives, she found that only a few of the student bloggers explicitly "reflected" on their journey insofar as they summarized in a general way how they were looking back at their accumulated past experiences and generating new understanding.

Moloney and Genua-Petrovic (2012) asked young student travelers to answer questions that connected to their direct experiences. Students were given prompts where they were asked to identify similarities and differences between their home culture and their new locale, and to notice whether their behavioral and thought patterns toward their own culture were changing. They found that students were able to move past simple

comparing and contrasting of home and host cultures and engage with dialogic questioning with themselves. Students' writing also demonstrated deeper thinking behind the meanings and values of specific behaviors and customs, and questioning of their position as travelers.

Jackson (2005), a study abroad instructor, created an Applied English Linguistics Seminar for students from Hong Kong enrolled in English language, cultural, and literary studies in the United Kingdom. In the seminar, students learned about ethnography and its research modes, such as self-reflexive observation and interviewing. Participants were encouraged to record difficult and challenging encounters of home-stay experiences with English families in journals that would be assessed at the end of their journey. Using Byram's intercultural communication competence framework to evaluate students' attitudes, cultural knowledge, skills of observing, relating, discovering, and interacting, and development in critical cultural awareness, Jackson found that students' journals showed that their intercultural relations shifted toward a greater awareness of cultural differences between their own and host culture, and a sense of cultural normativity.

Other studies have looked at writing, reflection, and intercultural learning in a tele-collaborative context. Frequently in these studies, researchers have used Byram's model of intercultural communication competence as a measure for evaluating learning outcomes. Elola and Oskoz (2008) analyzed the blog interactions of two groups of American college students, one that was located in a Spanish classroom in the United States, and the other group that was studying abroad in Spain. They adapted Byram's scale of intercultural communication competence to their classroom curriculum and examined changes over time in levels of students' interest in knowing other cultures, growth in their knowledge about their own and others' culture and their ability to resolve misunderstandings, and changes in perspective in coping with living in a different culture. English was used because the core of the blog and discussion activities focused on development of intercultural competence rather than language proficiency. For an

entire semester, curriculum was designed such that the college students based in America conducted research, wrote articles about Spanish cultural topics, and asked questions that were answered by the study abroad students in Spain, who acted as “intercultural informants” and “mediators between the home and host culture” (p. 455). In the analysis of open-ended responses in students’ pre- and post-surveys, the researchers found that both groups of students showed increases in intercultural competence that were tied to their specific contexts, and increased reflection on their home culture.

Lee (2011) examined how American study abroad students in Spain perceived the effectiveness of blogging and ethnographic interviews with native Spanish speakers in a curriculum designed to shape their intercultural competence and self-directed learning. The American students initiated blog posts on their individual interests as well as teacher-assigned readings about Spanish culture that were shared with the Spanish students, who shared their responses to the students’ posts. The curriculum also included interview assignments with native speakers, readings of articles about life in Spain, online videos on topics such as immigration issues, film viewings in Spanish, and cultural excursions to theatrical events. Lee found that the study abroad students reported gains in understanding, generating, and analyzing cross-cultural issues by writing reflective blogs; intercultural knowledge and skills by working with others; and increased motivation to learn about Spanish culture and people. Participants easily exchanged cultural information with their partners, but they showed difficulty with higher-order thinking that involved integrating existing thinking into new concepts or solutions (p. 100).

Key curricular components across all of the studies were discussions, prompts, or educator feedback that scaffolded students’ ideas of national culture by linking them to ideas of respectful communication, tolerance, awareness of cultural difference and similarity, and cooperation. As noted, educators are only beginning to address the issue of using online tools to support the outcome of critical reflection in the study abroad journey. The present scope of empirical research of online communication and learning

in study abroad contexts is still quite small. As generalizations about the inherently positive or negative attributes of study abroad experience, travel, technology, and communication persist, more empirical research is needed to understand to evaluate the impact of structured pedagogical and curricular efforts on student learning and how student experiences are communicated in the context of study abroad education.

Writing can take a myriad of forms in the study abroad classroom, and several researchers have addressed issues related to writing for different audiences in their studies, and ethics of cultural representation. Participants in a study abroad program who wrote about their experiences for home audiences found their writing difficult, leading Benda (2010) to suggest that educators discuss with participants how their narratives and stories might involve ethical decisions in their cultural descriptions, and not simply academic or intellectual content. Other researchers have argued that processes of reflective writing and deepening intercultural learning are best complemented with educative experiential experiences, such as through embedding oneself in a local context, undergoing intensive language learning, and working closely with local people to solve community problems. For researchers working in this space, a primary goal is to shift perspectives of American students traveling abroad from spectatorial, detached tourist gaze to critical, reflexive perspectives by helping students understand how culture is ideologically and materially constructed and manufactured, and to gain awareness of their biases.

Brockington and Wiedenhoeft (2009) expanded upon a previous ethnography project for students of Kalamazoo College studying abroad. Their new program included hands-on interaction with research sites and work with local community groups that were not led by students, and a final reflective paper. They observed that participants gained a deep understanding of intercultural relations and cultural contexts that occurred through their work with local groups without being leaders, and a prolonged opportunity to observe interactions, as well as partake in activities, from their particular sites of study

from the point of view of local participants. Participants were engaged and formed what the researchers described an expanded perspective that was inclusive of other perspectives. Bruckner and Johnson's (2005) study focused on understanding self-Other relationships in female undergraduate students, including students of color, through their written accounts while studying abroad in indigenous villages in Oaxaca, Mexico. They constructed their pre-trip course from the perspective of a pedagogical arts of the contact zone, based on Mary Louise Pratt's idea of zones of interaction between different groups as places of conflict, contestation, and ideological interaction. Instructors guided students to think critically about migration and borders, the effects of colonialism on indigenous cultures, and the role of memory on past and present history. In their pre-trip class, students read autoethnographic accounts of Mexican migration, watched documentaries, and were encouraged to view cultural issues from an autoethnographic lens (as travelers). Participants wrote about their travels throughout their journeys, and after spending time with social activists in Oaxacan villages, the writings of several students pointed to a greater awareness of the complexity of indigenous and colonial relations, as well as their own complicity as travelers with different social and economic privilege. In some instances, participants described how American racial or ethnic issues correlated with some of the experiences they encountered in Mexico. Researchers concluded that the combination of experiential learning and writing created a pedagogical arts of the contact zone, and that such practices might lead to social activism and greater awareness of social justice in students' own communities and abroad.

Perceived Limitations of Empirical Research

The above studies were connected by the shared subjects of student writing and reflection while studying abroad. Researchers considered issues that impacted student writing, such as questions relating to the ethics of representation, writing for different audiences, and technology. Beyond that, there were numerous analytic frames that

researchers used to structure and evaluate the content of students' writing, from exploring the affordances of different forms of narrative, to comparing students' description and reflection of their cultural context with established measures, such as Deardorff's intercultural competence model, Byram's intercultural communication competence framework, or Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity.

There were many limitations in a number of the studies, particularly around narrow views of culture and identity that focused solely national or ethnic affiliations. The idea of culture in many of studies reflected the continued predominance of discourses of international relations and national identity in educational research literature. Eva Wan-Shun Lam (2006) views culture as it is often described in educational research as tethered to static views of normative racial and ethnic identities; minority-majority relations encapsulated within nation-state boundaries; and theories of developmental and "differential" deficits within minority children. Along with other researchers seeking to change the concept of culture in educational inquiry, Lam writes that ideas of learning and culture must shift in the context of globalization:

This approach shifts our understanding of culture from stable identities, categorical memberships, and holistic traits to ways of acting and participating in diverse social groups and the heterogeneous sets of cultural knowledge, skills, and competence that are acquired in the process. (p. 217)

To an extent, the studies above did not reflect debates in theoretical literature between tensions of national and other forms of cultural or social identity, and only a few studies addressed ideas of global citizenship and cosmopolitan identity. Rizvi (2005) urges researchers to discuss the ways in which educational contexts and curricula co-construct certain forms of global citizenship or cosmopolitan identity—for instance, the neoliberal capitalist globetrotter (Rizvi, 2005) or the "networked individual DIY learner" (Williamson, 2012). To address this need, my study will examine how students' experiences with technology-supported global curricula interact with their existing cultural, national, ethnic, or other identifications.

Secondly, across the different participant age levels, disciplines, and geographic contexts, teachers or instructors working in their own classrooms conducted the majority of the research, potentially biasing the overall direction of the literature. Many of the studies were bound to what Leander, Phillips, and Taylor (2010) call the learning model of “classroom as container,” by failing to address the multitude of different virtual geographies, social networks that are traversed by individuals and groups on a daily basis beyond the boundaries of the physical classroom. Studies conducted from a sociocultural framework might add supplemental information to help educators, administrators, and policymakers better understand the impact of curriculum in the context of students’ personal digital habits and behaviors. Student perspectives of curricular interactions were notably absent, as were descriptions of how local knowledge and contexts informed or challenged their existing understanding of global ideas and media habits. If one dimension of globalization is mobility, then perhaps it would be apt to include studies of classroom learning can include students’ personal digital habits and behaviors outside of school. Student perspectives may provide additional insight into how learning occurs and how students interpret curriculum in ways that cannot be captured through formal assessment or in situ classroom observation.

Finally, only a minority of the studies above discussed ideas of privilege or inequity, and how students negotiated or reflected upon these issues in their writing. The rest focused rather generically on the idea of “difference” without looking more deeply into constructions of cultural difference and understanding how students are implicated through opportunities to pursue global travel and histories of mobility (Talburt, 2009). In study abroad education, many students continue to be unequal recipients of opportunity, access, and privilege and are themselves traveling to locations where inequities may be further magnified (Hoffa, 2007). All of these limitations point to a need for studies that consider expanding definitions of communication and cultural identity, and the demographic of participants involved. Further work is needed to understand student

narratives and variances of participation, connection to place, including global and local ideas and imaginings, representations of the self, and communication with home audiences. The following section describes a different way of theorizing intercultural communication that serves as the basis for the conceptual framework for the study and lens for interpreting student writing.

Cosmopolitan Communication

As illustrated above, researchers have typically relied on theories of intercultural communication and models of intercultural (communication) competence as the framework and rationale for conducting or analyzing research on writing, reflection, and digitally-mediated communication in study abroad contexts. Generally speaking, these discussions of intercultural learning evaluated communication as culture-general skills to be attained or developed by immersing oneself in a culturally unfamiliar setting.

By contrast, I perceive intercultural learning in study abroad contexts as a complex, nonlinear, and messy process informed by students' existing knowledge bases and prior life experiences, and their potential multiple and hybrid cultural, social, national, and other imagined identities shaped by larger structural narratives and communication networks. I define communication as the process of meaning making using symbols, gestures, images, and other modes of social and cultural interaction situated within processes of globalization. My definition of communication embedded in a sociocultural context and identity framework where ideas of self and other, local and global are complex, multiple, and, at times, contradictory. I was therefore drawn to other ways of thinking about communication and intercultural learning that might better address the perspectives of the diverse students that comprise study abroad populations today.

This next section outlines some of the basic ideas behind cosmopolitan communication, a conceptual framework for theorizing and researching educational

practice and contexts that addresses some of these concerns. I developed my theoretical and conceptual frameworks from a critical, interpretivist lens informed by my perspective as a communications and education researcher. Since my study was exploratory, my conceptual framework began as a loose set of ideas around learning, communication that gradually tightened over time, and ideas that I had initially held onto were abandoned in favor of terminology with finer meaning. I selected cosmopolitan communication as a conceptual lens for my study in anticipation that it might offer a new way to frame and analyze students' written texts while simultaneously thinking about their processes of reflection, identity, and ways of learning.

Cosmopolitanism offers another conceptual lens through which the study is considered and a way to think about participants' ways of interacting and reflecting as they connect to deeper values and sensibilities that encompass as well as extend beyond national boundaries. Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) describe cosmopolitanism as a philosophical "net" of ideas from postcolonial, cultural, sociology, anthropology and education—it is a "way of understanding how humans may forge meaningful intercultural connections through everyday mundane interactions and communication" (p. 6) that consider the relationship between humans and ideas of identity, cultural or social belonging, and political organization that extend beyond the boundaries of the nation-state to encompass ideas of the world or the concept of global.

The first mention of "cosmopolitan communication" can be found in the work of W. Barnett Pearce (1989), who created an entire theory of communication categorized into four forms: monocultural, ethnocentric, modernist, and cosmopolitan communication. Central to Pearce's theory of communication was the idea of resources, or stories and concepts created by individuals and groups for shaping and interpreting the social world, and practices, which were joint, collaborative efforts toward events and objects.

Pearce (1989) characterized monocultural, ethnocentric, and modernistic forms of communication by a tendency to privilege coherence (the processes through which humans told stories to interpret the world and their place in it) over coordination (the practices people used to result in good outcomes over bad ones), a feature of cosmopolitan communication. In the monocultural communicative context, communicators were all natives with shared resources and messages with zero interaction with cultural difference. Stories were not challenged in this context, and there were no perceived threats to existing knowledge or awareness of different perspectives. Ethnocentric communication occurred when resources were not at risk, and natives shared coherent meaning, while also acknowledging that non-natives do not share the same resources. Modernistic communication occurred in a situation with non-natives and risk to resources as well as different and unstable perspectives. By comparison, cosmopolitan communication was a type of postmodernist communication concerned with the coordination of different worldviews and perspectives and

[resulted] from a commitment to find ways of achieving coordination without (1) denying the existence or humanity of other ways of achieving coherence and mystery [in monocultural communication]; (2) deprecating or opposing 'other ways of achieving coherence and mystery, as ethnocentric communication: or (3) being committed to a perpetual process of changing one's own way of achieving coherence and mystery, as modernistic communication. (p. 169)

Although Pearce offered a view of cosmopolitan communication that dealt with conflict and multiple perspectives, he did not focus on its educational implications, and his notion of cosmopolitan communication was still oriented toward a binary process of interaction motivated by the achievement of good over bad outcomes.

An updated approach to considering how communication occurs in complex, shifting environments is found the work of Miriam Sobré-Denton and Nilanjana Bardhan, two intercultural communication and education scholars who bring together the fields of intercultural communication and education with the global and ethical orientations of

cosmopolitan theory and literature. Research on communication in educational contexts is still on the margins of cosmopolitan literature, and Sobré-Denton and Bardhan do the work of theoretically linking these broad concepts.

According to Sobré-Denton and Bardham (2013), the literature of historic and recent cosmopolitan theory in the areas of education, ethics, culture, and identity offers new ways of thinking about learning and relating to others in the age of persistent digital interaction and permeation of ideas and media. Their work builds on an extensive body of work and history engaging with education and cosmopolitan theory to contrast intercultural communication and its focus in education on cultivating harmonious or culture general and culturally sensitive interaction between distinct cultural and national groups with the global, hybrid, and postcolonial leanings of recent cosmopolitan thought. In their text, *Cultivating Cosmopolitanism for Intercultural Communication* (2013), which I have drawn upon extensively, the authors first point to forms of classical cosmopolitan thought in the Stoic philosopher Diogenes's statement and identification as a citizen of the world and its implications of connectedness to a broader community of people and relating to different perspectives. They also trace early cosmopolitan ideas in other ancient non-Western historic and ancient worldviews of inclusive and world community, and then to the political ideas of Kant, who theorized that individuals had the right to be treated with the same hospitality in a foreign land as they might expect in their own land, and that such relations and interactions ought to be reciprocated among nations. However, they critique these perspectives for privileging specific, elite worldviews and considering human relationality and subjectivity from governmental or political perspectives.

Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) then move on to describe vernacular or everyday cosmopolitanism and its impact in education, which they attribute to philosophers such as Kwame Anthony Appiah and David Hansen, and the exploration of cosmopolitanism from "below," or "on the ground," the perspective of everyday social

relations and ongoing dynamics that extend from the local and beyond. They then define their view of cosmopolitanism, communication, and education as a perspective tied to everyday social relations as well as critical and postcolonial theory. Drawing upon the work of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of dialogical, dialectical conversations with what they describe as "culturally different Others," Sobré-Denton and Bardhan discuss cosmopolitan communication as a "form of hopeful communication that engages in complex imaginings of self, Other, and world" through interconnected and dynamic interactions. Specifically, they highlight the performative dimensions of cosmopolitan communication and point to current theories of cultural hybridity, liminality, and borderlands in order to locate the creation or emergence of cosmopolitan communication in spaces of mutuality, dialogue, and translation.

Criticism of Intercultural Communication Theory

As mentioned earlier, much of the literature on intercultural communication and education emphasizes communication as a process focused on aspects of accommodation, misunderstanding, effectiveness, motivation, and positive outcomes. Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) criticize this research as limiting in its views of culture, society, identity, and communication. Ideas of pluralism and discrete groups existing within nation-states are sustained and frequently perpetuated in discourse without acknowledging different forms of affiliation, or multiple identities emerging through context and in performance. Cultural differences are not limited to national boundaries or commonly ascribed, external traits; rather, they are points of tension and reflection that are deeply contextual, with the possibility of extending to multiple locations and identities. Sobré-Denton and Bardhan's concept of cosmopolitan communication does not completely abandon many of the ideas in intercultural communication competence. They acknowledge overlap in terms of types of skills found in existing models of intercultural communication competence and sensitivity, particularly those that might contribute to respectful dialogue

and critical engagement. They highlight how cosmopolitan communication is not necessarily a product of formal teaching or measurable in a positivist sense, but rather a performance that is necessarily relational:

We propose a shift from a more traditional individualistic model of intercultural communication competence towards an embodied and relational understanding more akin to relational empathy ... [with a] focus less on specific measurable outcomes seen as properties within an individual and more on reflexive syntheses of experiences that can lead to a lifelong process of cosmopolitanism cosmopolitanism does not reside within individuals but is produced through communicative performance. (p. 98)

A Working Definition of Cosmopolitan Communication

Based on their own empirical work in classrooms and supported by research by other educators that have documented examples of these types of performative, hospitable connections that have occurred between learners in formal, informal, and afterschool contexts (DeJaynes, 2015; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Sobré-Denton, Carlsen, & Gruel, 2014; Vasudevan, Kerr, Hibbert, Fernandez, & Park, 2014), Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2013) define cosmopolitan communication as a type of performative, intentional interaction that acknowledges the dynamic interrelatedness of the self, world, and Other and aims to transform perceptions toward ideas of global and social justice, inclusive of the following assumptions:

1. Cosmopolitan communication is world and Other oriented.
2. Cosmopolitan communication accomplishes mutuality.
3. Cosmopolitan communication is attentive to power.
4. Cosmopolitan communication actively engages borders.
5. Cosmopolitan communication invests in a dialogical, emancipatory, and non-oppositional view of cultural difference.
6. Cosmopolitan communication sees critical transformation as a key goal.

7. Cosmopolitan communication is hopeful and deliberative—it is never coercive.

Sobré-Denton and Bardhan's (2013) framework of cosmopolitan communication also addresses ideas of cultural enmeshment and implication in historical and contemporary legacies of power and privilege. While study abroad students may be considered by some researchers and theorists as the embodiments of a certain type of "cosmopolitan" subjectivity, e.g., as representations of affluent, mobile, culturally knowledgeable consumer-tourists with imperialist, ethnocentric perspectives reproducing neocolonial narratives and activities, Sobré-Denton and Bardhan depart from ideas of cosmopolitanism as limited to an elite social class or group. They perceive cosmopolitan communication as a performance and dialogue that explores marginal perspectives, cultural enmeshment, and translocal as well as global perspectives. Their premise of cosmopolitan communication considers identity beyond individualist neoliberal and nationalist concerns to encompass participation in real and imagined communities and identities that might include multiple affiliations. I shared their perspective of cosmopolitan communication as a relational performance that included sensitivity to the realities of power differentials and imperialist, colonial legacies, and a negotiation of multiple and flexible identities reaching across boundaries that did not abandon local beliefs or knowledge.

As will be shown, the lens of cosmopolitan communication facilitated consideration of the participants and analysis of their writing from a perspective different from that of current research literature. Although I found limitations in intercultural communication and intercultural competence literature, I also did not want to abandon its ideas completely, since inherent in many of the definitions of intercultural communication and competence are valuable descriptors and normative traits. Similar to the idea of transformation in intercultural learning, Martin (2014), reviewing Sobré-

Denton and Bardhan, writes about the self-transformation that comes with cosmopolitan communication:

Cosmopolitan communication involves transformation of the self in an interdependent, rather than independent, sense: it is an “Other-oriented approach and openness toward the world ... a dialogic interplay of the Self, Other, and the World, and a mode of critical self-transformation [that] pushes ... toward a sense of belonging that is thoroughly interdependent with the cultural Other.” (p. xi)

The framework of cosmopolitan communication also enabled me to consider participants’ phenomena from a broader perspective than theories of communication that generated simple home/host culture distinctions, particularly since they were sharing their experiences with “home” audiences that, on the one hand, they identified with in terms of being mostly native speakers of the English language, and on the other, were significantly different from them in age and other life experiences. It added greater complexity to students’ identities and ideas of the Other. Blommaert (1998) criticizes the idea that Others are rendered static in common understandings of intercultural communication:

Remarkably, though, whereas the intercultural object—the “Other”—is usually pictured as caught in a web of age-old essential and inflexible values and customs, those who have identified the other claim to be free of such determinism. Their values are immutable, static, always valid and in action. We, on the contrary, have been able to develop “intercultural awareness.” (pp. 27-28)

He argues that by focusing on the “horizontal” differences in culture, we neglect its vertical differences—e.g., power structures, hierarchies of inequality—and we also neglect the fact that cultural differences are frequently not treated as equivalent in societies, and the material production and reproduction of cultural phenomena are tied to conditions and contexts of production. Some of the ideas within cosmopolitan communication and critical understandings of intercultural communication address some of these vertical cultural, social, and other differences that have been flattened, neglected, or obscured.

I also considered examining the concept of global citizenship as a framework for thinking about students' communication before deciding to write through the lens of cosmopolitan theory. Although the two terms have many overlaps in educational research and practice, in my understanding, global citizenship has civic implications in education, while proponents of cosmopolitanism have explored pedagogy, curriculum, and foundations from a philosophical and ethical perspective. I was interested in the dimension of cosmopolitan theory that emphasized openness and moral and ethical orientations to communication. As will be described in later chapters, I found that a number of participants in the study reported a sense of personal responsibility to people within and beyond their local communities at home and abroad, as well as a sense of belonging to a world community of humans. This study was thereby also a test case to investigate whether cosmopolitan communication was a salient concept and research lens for investigators of writing and intercultural learning in study abroad contexts. Together, these strands of cross-disciplinary conceptual thought guided the design and analysis of my study, which will be further explicated in the next few chapters.

Chapter III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research explored in a qualitative capacity how study abroad students wrote about their experiences and represented themselves to distant audiences on a pedagogically-oriented digital platform. On some areas of the site, they wrote about their experiences in response to prompts, and elsewhere, they wrote in a freeform way. In particular, the study focused on looking at the relationship between the intercultural experiences students considered important to reflect upon, how they described such experiences and their audience, and the ways that curriculum did or did not support reflection upon such experiences. This chapter outlines the methodology used to collect and analyze data around the central thesis in order to address the following research questions:

1. How do students reflect in writing upon their study abroad experiences to diverse audiences in an online pedagogical context?
2. What types of study abroad experiences do students reflect on in an online (pedagogical) context?
3. How does an online pedagogical context shape the ways students represent their study abroad experiences to diverse audiences?
4. To what extent does pedagogically-oriented writing support deep levels of reflection while students study abroad?

This chapter is divided into sections that address the rationale behind the qualitative research framework and the study design. The first half of this chapter discusses the qualitative method in relation to the overall research context. It also includes a description of the research setting and learning context set up by a global education organization, as well as its curricular program, which provided guidelines and structure for the study abroad students' writing. I also describe the digital platform where students' interactions took place. The second half of the chapter includes the sampling strategy, data collection techniques, analytic and interpretative processes, a statement of researcher subjectivity, and the ethical considerations of conducting research with human subjects. The chapter concludes with an overview of the basic demographics of the group in order to set up the thematic inquiry and analysis articulated in following chapters.

Qualitative Research Framework

Basic qualitative studies are characterized by a drive to understand how people make sense of their lives and worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative study design was selected to capture the richness of experience as expressed in students' accounts and provide additional insight into students' motivations as well as their processes of writing and reflection. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), qualitative research is appropriate for describing and understanding the perspectives of participants engaged in complex social phenomena, as well as for describing how such phenomena occur in context (p. 8). This study was conducted to further domain and disciplinary knowledge, with the aim of applying knowledge to pedagogical practices used to support study abroad students' intercultural learning and better understanding their processes of reflection and communication. The decision to pursue qualitative research was motivated by the potential for added insight into the complexities of students' experiences and the

observation that a significant number of study abroad and intercultural communications research studies were based in quantitative paradigms and ideas of measurable learning outcomes. In addition, existing qualitative studies focused on narrow ideas of culture and cultural difference framed mostly from a national or ethnic-based perspective, and presented a limited, mainstream portrait of student demographics.

As qualitative research, this study was aligned with the ontological and epistemological claims of interpretivism, a paradigm that supports the idea of multiple realities and socially, historically, and culturally constructed knowledge. This contrasts with positivist paradigms that privilege objectivity, causality, and the testability of theories (Bernard, 2011; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) posit that an orientation toward an interpretivist paradigm in research privileges “reconstructed understandings of the social world” and emphasizes meaning generated through dynamic interaction between researchers and participants (p. 247). The study was grounded in the belief that students construct knowledge and generate meaning about their experiences over time through ongoing communicative practices and social interactions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sobre-Denton and Bardhan’s theory of cosmopolitan communication offered a valuable lens for exploring emergent themes and thinking about the writing of study abroad experiences, as the idea of cosmopolitan communication creates space to consider openness and receptivity and opportunities to interrogate ideas of cultural difference.

Case Study Approach

The use of a case study approach, along with the thematic analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews and surveys, highlighted the nuances of the complex phenomena. Case studies are defined by their boundaries and delimitations and can refer to processes, groups, individuals, or organizations, among other entities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Instrumental case studies, as defined by Stake (1994), are case studies that

provide knowledge and understanding of specific issues. A qualitative case study, according to Merriam and Tisdale (2015), includes rich description and focuses on a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon in question involved a diverse group of study abroad students and their written reflections on personal intercultural experiences on a digital platform to an authentic audience. The study illuminated through description the types of experiences students wrote about, how they constructed specific identities and narratives through their study and travel experiences, whether or not they engaged in practices of reflection in their writing, and how their individual writing was situated within the broader pedagogical framework provided by the program. It also considered the particular experiences of a select subgroup of key informants that either were somewhat representative of the group or deviated from it in significant ways.

Document analysis and interviewing were two key data collection methods that enabled a comparison of the simultaneous daily lives of 30 student participants (through document analysis) as well as a focus on a select group of seven students (through interviews and document analysis) who authored their weekly articles and participated in videoconferences with their assigned classrooms. The use of interviews in data collection is consistent with a qualitative research approach and the interpretivist understanding that knowledge is accessible through social interactions and socially constructed narratives (Maxwell, 2013). Kvale (2007) offers a metaphor of the interviewer as a traveler who is seeking to understand the perspectives of others through conversation; in fact, according to Kvale, the original Latin meaning of the word “conversation” may be interpreted as “wandering together with”:

The interview-Traveler ... walks along with the local inhabitants, asks questions and encourages them to tell their own stories of their lived world. The potentialities of meanings in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through the travelers' interpretation. (pp. 19-20)

Data from interviews enabled the exploration of participants' perspectives, particularly regarding issues that were not observable or difficult to observe, and

provided insight into the process of creating written narratives and the ways participants understood their world (Bryman, 2012; Krathwohl, 2009; Kvale, 2007). Throughout this study, interviews provided students with the opportunity to describe the process of composing their articles and the decisions and interactional contexts behind their work. Qualitative, open-ended surveys also provided demographic context and data that supplemented student interviews and their documents. To summarize, a qualitative method grounded in the associated methodology of a case study utilizing data from a survey, documents, and interviews provided the basis for the design of the study.

Study Design

The period of research for this study was between July 2015 and March 2016. The study was based in a large metropolitan area in the United States; research participants were stationed throughout the world. Participants in the research study were college students currently enrolled in four-year colleges or universities based in the United States. They met the requirements of the most commonly cited criteria for study abroad participants in the literature—the Institute of International Education’s definition of the general study abroad population—by having enrolled in different programs at foreign colleges or universities for academic credit at their home institutions. All of the participants were recipients of a federally-funded travel scholarship with a service learning requirement. In order to fulfill their service learning requirement, the participants volunteered to be authors of curriculum where they were matched with partnering school classrooms throughout the United States in a program of online travel correspondence. Individual college students were eligible to participate in the study if they had completed all required assignments for 1 semester, thereby demonstrating consistent participation as a volunteer author and travel correspondent for the online program.

Study abroad students' interactions and experiences occurred over 6 months while crossing national, continental, and virtual borders, and were documented as a part of the study through surveys, interviews, and digital artifact analysis. Altogether, participants traveled to 20 countries on four continents. Over the course of the study, participants' work as volunteer authors was situated in a dense structure of social, textual, and material relations, and the meaning they derived from their work was tied to specific contexts and narratives of personal achievement, intellectual curiosity, global travel and tourism, sojourning, technology and connectivity, and global intercultural relations.

The Research Site: An Online Global Education Program Setting

Program Background

All of the participants were recipients of a study abroad scholarship for populations that were typically underrepresented in study abroad programs. They were also voluntary participants in a program of online journalism and correspondence that was facilitated by an educational nonprofit organization with a stated goal of developing globally competent citizens through a program of online journalism. College students apply to be volunteers for the program, and write about their experiences for audiences of public school classrooms that follow their journeys on a website. Program administrators select the college student sojourners, match these travelers with schools, edit and maintain the website, and offer onsite, in-classroom training and technical support for videoconferences. Through the firsthand experiences of travelers, young students in public schools gain awareness of cultural differences, local and global problems, and knowledge regarding college and study abroad opportunities. Program administrators design enrichment curriculum and coordinate a program of online journalism connecting partnering schools, largely comprised of public school classrooms located in one of the largest metropolises in the American Northeast, and American study abroad students. The

program extends its reach to multiple schools and college student participants all over the globe, while the program office and online platform serve as a central communications hub. Individual teachers or entire schools can opt to use the curriculum as enrichment for their standard classroom curriculum. The typical period of use is a single school term.

The Program Application Process

Before they went abroad, all 30 of the participants had applied for and received a federal scholarship for college students typically underrepresented in academic study abroad programs. Part of the scholarship required a service project to be completed upon return. Participants were informed that they could apply to become volunteer online travel correspondents for a global education organization that created enrichment curriculum as a way of fulfilling their service project requirement.

All participants applied online to become volunteer travel correspondents for the global education organization by submitting two pieces of writing: a brief personal introduction and an example of a specific travel experience that was aimed at an imagined audience of American fifth grade elementary school students. After their writing was evaluated by staff in the nonprofit education organization for overall engagement, audience appropriateness, copy-editing, and demonstration of intercultural sensitivity, participants were notified by email that they had been accepted as online volunteer correspondents. They also received an electronic editorial calendar with a schedule for publishing weekly articles and style guidelines, and online links to several webcasts with instructions for publishing text and photographs onto the website.

The participants were all part of different academic study abroad programs, even though several attended the same university. They were aware that they were part of a larger group of students who had received scholarships for study abroad and opted to write online about their experiences as a service project requirement. They did not personally know other students who had participated as writers in the service program.

Curricular Content

The editorial guide provided the participants with information on the structure of different article formats and instructions to tell their stories with descriptive language, age-appropriate text, and emphasis on the positive aspects of their experience. Participants were advised to refrain from writing about sensitive topics such as drinking or comparing wealth inequality.

Over the course of the 12-week correspondence, participants authored one or two different types of articles per week. Every week they composed “Field Notes” that combined fact-based research with summaries of their personal experience as they related to specific topics such as “Food,” “Transportation,” “Nature,” “Traditions,” and “Communities.” In these articles, participants responded to regular prompts such as “How does this X connect to their environment?” They wrote about the general geography of their countries, seasonal and climate differences, and some of the social and environmental challenges that people living in their host countries faced. “Logbooks” were short entries that chronicled participants’ in- and out-of-country travels, local weather, flora and fauna encountered, and other activities and news. Participants also conducted two interviews with local residents and children about daily life and their activities and interests that they posted onto the website.

Participants’ lengthiest articles were open-ended reflections called “Journals.” The editorial guide provided students with topics to follow in their journal articles, including a required autobiographical entry where they introduced themselves to their distant audiences. Other possible suggested journal article topics included integrating into the local community; recognizing perspectives and identifying stereotypes; international careers; and learning the language of the host country. At the end of their semester-long journeys, all participants composed a Farewell journal article where they were prompted to reflect on their previous articles and experiences and offer career and college advice

for their student audiences. Participants were also required to post photos and captions that accompanied the different article types.

Web Platform Structure

Participants composed their writing and submitted it electronically through a custom-designed web-based content management system for review. They logged in with a username and password, located different topics, composed their articles in form fields, and uploaded photos and videos. Articles were read first by remote editors, who were either professional volunteers or staff members of the global educational organization. A backend messaging system allowed two-way communication between the authors, remote editors, classroom teachers, and administrative staff. Although the backend of the content management system and article format resembled the interface and system design of web blogs, the platform did not include features typical of blogs, such as a comments section or content display in chronological order or search ability by post date. Remote editors would check participants' written articles for copy edits, stylistic or content issues, and publish final content at the end of the week. If edits were needed, the volunteer editors would contact participants with their specific request. The majority of participants' writings were only corrected for copy editing and grammatical errors, although some participants were asked to rewrite an article because they did not follow the article prompts or wrote about overly generic topics. The writing was to an extent self-paced and could be done at any time over the course of a week, but the participants were given hard deadlines to submit one piece of writing per week.

Audience

The final component to the site background was the partner school context. In the first 3 weeks of their participation in the program by writing articles, participants were informed by email that they had been matched with a classroom. The participants were predominantly matched with schools from a metropolitan area in the Northeastern United

States, with three participants matched with schools from other states. While participants were writing curricular content that would be used in an enrichment context for classroom teachers, they did not have control over how their writing would be taught or presented, or whether or not they would be matched with a school and classroom. Of the 30 participants, 19 were matched with their classrooms, but only 18 participants actually corresponded with their classrooms.

A total of 11 school and one community center partner were matched with the 18 college student participants. Most of the schools that were paired with the participants were comprised of mostly non-White students, and the majority of students across all schools received a free or reduced lunch. All of the schools were public; two were high schools, and the rest were middle schools. The public and matched schools accessed the content through the main program website, which contained a map that organized participants by the geographic region in which they were studying abroad. Participants' writings were searchable on the main website, indexed online by participant, and organized by individual journey and country. Visitors to the website could explore writings from all participants.

Videoconferencing

While participants were writing curricular content that would be used in an enrichment context for classroom teachers, they did not have control over how their writing would be taught or presented, or whether or not they would be matched with a classroom. Teachers in classrooms used the enrichment curriculum to support their own curriculum, and there was no standard format beyond the structure of the curriculum. Therefore, there was a large range of variability among schools, classrooms, and teachers in terms of how the curriculum was taught and delivered. However, this was not a concern for the study, since the research was not focused on how effective the

participants' writings were as classroom instructional tools in producing specific learning outcomes, or how distant audiences interpreted participants' online documents.

Fourteen of the 25 participants that responded to the survey reported that they videoconferenced with matched classrooms at least once during the semester. Typically, videoconferences were set up to accommodate classroom schedules. As a result, the participants would speak to their matched classroom at odd hours of the night or early morning, depending on their locations. Participants would share a little bit about their experiences abroad during these sessions and answer questions from the students about the following topics: the types of food consumed abroad, whether or not the participant enjoyed their experience, the currency type and economy, political and cultural features of their new place of residence, types of leisure activities available, music, and school activities.

Sampling Strategy and Recruitment

Participants were selected through a nested sampling design with the purpose of soliciting the perspectives of the entire cohort ($n = 30$) and focusing on a smaller subgroup of key informants ($n = 7$) whose perspectives were analyzed in greater depth through semi-structured interviews. The nested nature of the design refers to the relationship between the larger group of participants, and the smaller group of analysis, which represents a subset of the larger group (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The smaller group of key informants was selected through purposeful sampling at the beginning of their summer study abroad programs on the basis of two primary criteria. First, key informants were selected for maximum variation to facilitate representation of a range of experiences and interests in this study. They differed across traits typical to enrollment in study abroad programs, including ethnic background, the amount of travel experience they had outside of the United States prior to enrollment in the study abroad program, and their levels of foreign language

experience. Those selected represented study abroad experiences in different countries in order to explore how geographic destinations might influence the perspectives students relayed to the audience at home. Second, key informants were also partly chosen based on their writing ability, which was assessed from graded writing samples in their application forms for volunteer positions at the global education online travel correspondence program. This decision reflects privileging competence in written communication. Tremblay (1989) cites communicability, the trait of being able to intelligibly communicate one's perspective to a researcher and interviewer, as a desirable characteristic of an ideal key informant. Since one of the guiding research questions examined how students communicated their experiences, the decision to select informants with a medium to high proficiency in writing ability aligned with the scholarly exploration of examples of in-depth student reflection.

An email was sent to the entire cohort ($n = 30$) requesting permission to study their interactions through an online survey and the collection and analysis of their online articles. Students from the larger cohort who volunteered to participate were entered into a raffle for \$25, \$50, and \$75 gift cards. Potential key informants ($n = 7$) were sent separate individual emails with requests for permission to study their communication through collection and analysis of online survey and online articles, as well as a request to participate in an hour-long interview conducted at the end of their travels, and submit two audio recordings of their classroom videoconferences. The informants were compensated \$100 for the additional time requirements of participation. Participants received online consent forms through a hyperlink on the survey platform, SurveyMonkey.

Ethics

The creation of an environment of trust, mutuality, and reciprocity is critical to open communication and interaction with research participants (LeCompte & Schensul,

2010, p. 14). Negotiating relationships with participants is a primary consideration in qualitative research and does not attempt to minimize differences between individual researchers as quantitative and positivist traditions do (Maxwell, 2013). Guided by the idea of an “ethics of care,” I communicated the purpose and objectives of the study to the study’s participants and took care to provide transparent and accurate interpretations of their experiences (Noddings, 2005; Rallis, 2012). The Institutional Review Board at Teachers College approved the study, and protocols were followed to ensure the informed consent of study participants and minimize risk. An interview guide and survey protocol were developed, along with participant consent forms for the collection of data through interviews, surveys, videoconference, and participant written articles (Appendix C).

In order to protect the identities of participants and maintain confidentiality, the names of the college student participants, their home universities, and their matched middle school sites were kept confidential, and pseudonyms were used in the study in order to protect the identities of participants. Pseudonyms were assigned at the time of transcription, both to participants and to organizations. In the transcription of audio recordings of class sessions, the names of the middle school students were also anonymized, and their comments and questions paraphrased to protect the identities of the student discussants and to focus the study exclusively on the participants’ narratives about their study abroad experiences. Videoconference audio recordings and other digital data were secured on an encrypted hard drive accessible only to myself and stored in my home and school offices.

Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys

There were four types of data collected throughout the research. The entire cohort of volunteers ($n = 30$) were asked to complete an open-ended survey distributed at the end of their visits abroad (see Appendix C). The survey asked participants for demographic information, including the number of times they videoconferenced with their matched classrooms and whether they had traveled outside of the United States prior to their study abroad trip. The survey also requested that students describe how participation in writing for the global education program fit into their digital habits abroad. It gave them another opportunity to describe their interactions with online editors and their school audiences during the online videoconferences, and identify areas of interest or challenges in their writing and program participation.

Online Articles

The second form of data collected from the cohort was the corpus of online texts. These articles were produced by the study abroad participants and comprised the fundamental text- and image-based documents used in the program's classroom curriculum. The volunteer correspondents authored one article every week on the following required topics: daily life, kids, food, transportation, nature, traditions, environment, and communities. They also authored long-form articles on topics of their own choosing, as well as an autobiographical introductory article and a farewell article. Examples of article titles by past study abroad students have been: "New Place ... New Perspective," "Lessons Learned Abroad," "Money Management for Studying Abroad," "Learning the Language," and "Keeping Perspective in Chilly Moscow." Participants were required to produce 20 articles over the course of their study abroad journey.

Videoconference Audio Recordings

Audio recordings of classroom videoconferences were collected from the seven key informants. As part of the curriculum, participants were also required to videoconference with their matched classrooms at least two times during the course of their journeys. For the purpose of the study, key informants were requested to provide audio recordings of at least two videoconferences of their matched middle school classrooms.

Interviews

Two 60-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the seven key informants at the end of their study abroad semesters, for a total of 14 semi-structured interviews. Since the purpose of the study is to understand how participants communicate about their experiences in the online pedagogical space, 2 interviews were conducted. The first interview was conducted in the early portion of the participants' journeys, and the second interview was conducted close to the final completion of all writing and videoconferencing assignments, and after preliminary analysis of their online articles.

The scheduling of interviews took place over email, and the interviews were conducted using Skype or Google Hangout for a duration of approximately 45 minutes (Appendix D). The seven informants were asked to comment upon their written articles and the types of interactions they had during videoconferences with their matched classrooms. The types of questions asked during these interviews included: What topic did you most enjoy writing about and why? How did you arrive at this topic? What was most challenging to write about? What were your digital habits while abroad? How did writing fit into your daily schedule? How would you describe your experience videoconferencing with the younger students? Interviews were recorded via Skype Recorder, a third-party application for Skype, then transcribed. Follow-up and debriefing sessions with interviewees and program staff were conducted based on questions or

issues that arose from content analysis of articles and interviews. This was done to clarify meaning and develop a fuller understanding of content.

Coding

Participants' datasets were considered through the lens of cosmopolitanism as understood from a communication perspective. The datasets were initially analyzed without imposing set codes or rubrics in order to allow for themes to emerge organically from the data. Written articles and transcripts of audiorecordings and interviews were coded several times in NVivo, a digital data analysis program. Articles were organized by type and first coded, line by line, in an open format. The language of gerunds was used in codes to help outline process. This generated several dozen topics, which were then grouped into themes. A second pass through the data generated broader categories, such as: home, community, friendship, expressions of cultural difference, communal eating, language learning, preparation for travel, and hospitality. In the process of exploring the data, codes were organized into hierarchies and clusters, then analyzed in relation to categories driven by the study research questions, such as digital and online communication, global education curricula, cosmopolitan forms of identity, Web-based learning, reflection, and writing. Codes were also examined in relation to individual participants in order to develop a cross-case comparison. Responses were compared from participant to participant to look for patterns within each individual student's responses and across similar countries or geographic regions. The responses of the key informants were compared against patterns and themes drawn from the larger cohort and broader ideas found within study abroad literature related to digitally-mediated learning and intercultural and study abroad experiences.

Articles produced by informants were analyzed using corpus analysis, an inductive, exploratory methodology for investigating phenomena in an authentically occurring body of text through computer-based access, retrieval, and analysis (Hasko, 2012). Corpus

analysis is typically used alongside quantitative analytic strategies and other forms of linguistic analysis to provide a richer portrait of language use “beyond bare statistics of occurrence” (Hasko, 2012, p. 4). Corpus analyses of study abroad documents have been conducted with a comparable sample size; for instance, in one study by Papatsiba (2006), a corpus of 80 written reflections by French students participating in semester-long exchanges to various European countries through the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS) program yielded valuable insight into different experiences of cultural proximity and distance.

Frequency analysis was also conducted on the gestalt of the articles, organized by type, to examine frequency of coverage of different topics and patterns of human interaction documented in the articles. This provided insight into spatial coverage and geographical references, such as whether or not students chose to write about their city of residence or the country as a whole in their articles about their local environment. This allowed for the exploration of local and global dynamics, such as whether students covered local urban problems, such as bicycle sharing, in the “community” articles or larger ones, such as the global refugee crisis. This analysis identified recurring sets of individuals that students were interacting with, ranging from family members in the United States, to members of their host families, along with fellow university students, fellow international students, colleagues in a university lab, and tourists. These groupings were explored in relation to their representation of individuals in their written descriptions. Data collected through the survey were also analyzed through a basic descriptive statistical analysis using Excel to filter counts and frequencies of study participants’ demographic data.

The diverse methods of data analysis were selected to examine similarities and differences in thematic content produced by key informants and understand how such ideas might be embedded in specific contexts over time. Issues of validity and reliability were addressed by actively pursuing evidence that contradicted participants’ self-reported

data, searching for alternative explanations for participants' responses, and paying close attention to discrepancies and inconsistencies in the surveys, interviews, and articles. As Maxwell (2013) puts it, validity in research relies upon the use of evidence tested against one's findings, not in the methods researchers use to "safeguard" against bias. The validity of conclusions drawn from the data was assessed by exploring contradictory evidence that included revelations of boredom, repetition, narrow focus, and national cultural stereotyping in participants' authored content.

Reflexivity and Subjectivity

All researchers possess "subjective" qualities, such as class, status, and individual values, that interact with the investigation at hand (Peshkin, 1988). Qualitative researchers operate from the premise that inquiry is intersubjective, interpretative, value-laden, and tied to contextual, relational positionality and ongoing interactions with participants. Such a premise posits a direct challenge to positivist assumptions of objectivity and the idea that researchers' questions and supporting theories or frameworks are not guided by their personal experiences, histories, and values (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005).

As a qualitative researcher, I acknowledge that my perspective is emic and that my own personal and professional experiences shaped the direction of the current study. From 2009 to 2013, I worked with the global education nonprofit organization that is discussed throughout this research study. This organization designed the curriculum that is also discussed throughout the study as an enrichment curriculum for global competence and citizenship learning in elementary and middle school classrooms. The curriculum was created with the idea that travelers, in this case study abroad college students, would write about and photograph their experiences for a younger audience, helping to cultivate an interest in global issues, studying abroad, and learning about different cultures for those following their journeys online. The organization I studied and worked for also

matched the study abroad college student scholarship recipients with partnering middle school classrooms throughout the United States.

I first assisted program staff with the development of global competence assessments for participating middle school classrooms. In 2013, I implemented the curriculum in a middle school classroom and facilitated videoconferences with a college student study abroad volunteer correspondent based in the Democratic Republic of Georgia. I also served briefly as a program manager whose responsibilities included traveling to multiple school sites and providing technical, logistical, and administrative support for curriculum implementation. Although there was potential for researcher bias and distortion of findings given my past roles in the organization, the benefits of my experiences and access to both the organization and potential participants outweighed the disadvantages. I did not undertake any paid research work in the process of conducting and writing the dissertation or conduct any prior research for the global education organization that recruited the volunteer college students to produce their curricular content.

I took precautions to clearly identify and delineate the assumptions made by the organization in promoting intercultural education through study abroad and sensitizing young students to the possibilities of attending college, travel, and studying abroad from my own intellectual framework. To minimize bias and reduce potential conflict of interest, I shared my findings on a regular basis with other education researchers in my field and regularly discussed the potential for misdirected researcher bias with my dissertation committee. In the process of researching, collecting, and analyzing data, I experienced tensions in regard to the negotiation of my relationships with the organization that created the curriculum. I had gained access and trust from members of the organization through my history of working with its administrators in various capacities, designed my study from an ethical standpoint, and secured the appropriate permissions from the Teachers College IRB. However, over the course of the study, I

found myself questioning the limitations curriculum, mainly because I observed that the college student participants of the study could not share everything they wanted to about their experiences because of their younger audience, and thus I was occasionally at odds with how explicitly critical I could be in my findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Alongside these concerns, I worked to ensure that I protected the organization's identity and its members, and that the recommendations or changes to written reflection that I made could be approached from a generalized way that other organizations would find useful and not harmful to the organization I had researched.

Following Peshkin's (1988) methodological recommendation that qualitative researchers should attend to how their attitudes and affects are changing by interacting in particular contexts, I kept regular memos and a researcher journal to understand how my views of personal identity and agency were shifting in relation to students' responses. Much as the participants' online articles functioned as reflections of their thinking processes, the research journal helped me to assemble emergent thoughts and ideas and their links to theoretical concepts. The journal may also be used as a schematic tool generated to assist other researchers pursuing similar inquiries and to inform readers of my decision-making processes throughout the research process (Shenton, 2004).

Limitations and Additional Considerations

The demographics and experiences of student participants are not representative of the entire study abroad population from the United States, which may limit the generalizability of the findings for all study abroad programs. However, one of the strengths of the study is perhaps this very fact. Responses from the participants provide student perspectives from minority groups or students with financial, cultural, or other challenges that have traditionally been excluded from study abroad populations for many reasons, including self-selection or a lack of outreach and mentors in higher education (Thompson-Jones, 2012; Twombly et al., 2012).

Another limitation generalizable to self-report studies is the problem of informants overstating their abilities and competencies when questioned, for reasons of “deference” or social desirability, or to increase social standing (Bernard, 2011; Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). Respondents may provide exaggerated or false responses during interviews. Inaccuracies, while unavoidable, can be minimized with strategies such as asking students to restate their response or by showing them data to confirm (Bernard, 2011). This strategy was used throughout the study to increase the reliability of the data presented. If participants were shy or if they strayed off topic, long questions or a series of similar questions were asked to prompt students to elaborate on their responses (Bernard, 2011, p. 163). After the first interview, questions in the protocol were modified and revised.

Finally, as mentioned previously, the study was also limited by the curriculum, which was developed for a younger audience and not specifically for the study abroad college students.

General Demographic Information

A total of 30 college students participated in the study. Demographic data regarding participants’ gender, ethnicity, major, language of study, previous travel experience, and present study abroad destination were requested and drawn from surveys distributed to the 30 participants as well as information provided in their written articles. Twenty-five of these participants, or 83%, responded to a survey with multiple choice demographic questions and open-ended questions that was distributed at the end of the semester. Additional data were imputed from student interviews and information provided in student writings. There were 20 females and 10 males that participated in the study. Below is a table of the participants by gender.

Table 1. Participant Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	20	67%
Male	10	33%
Total	30	100%

Participants' state of residence included 15 different states, with over a third reported residing in California. Percentages are rounded down, but the total is 100% accounting for frequency counts. Of the 30 total participants, 73% went to public universities in their home state.

Table 2. Participant State of Residence

State of Residence	Frequency	Percentage
California	11	37%
New York	4	13%
Illinois	3	10%
Colorado	1	3%
Florida	1	3%
Idaho	1	3%
Massachusetts	1	3%

Table 2 (continued)

State of Residence	Frequency	Percentage
Maryland	1	3%
Michigan	1	3%
Missouri	1	3%
Nevada	1	3%
Oregon	1	3%
Texas	1	3%
Washington	1	3%
Wisconsin	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Participants also came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Forty-four percent self-identified as non-White, and another 40% identified as White/non-Hispanic. The rest did not respond to the ethnic background question in their surveys or did not take the survey. Compared to the national average of non-White students (27.1%) that studied abroad in 2015-2016 in the Institute of International Education's Open Doors report, the group included a higher proportion of minority, non-White students, including multiracial students. In total, the number of minority students including multiracial students totaled 44% of those that responded to the survey. All participants of the research study were recipients of a scholarship for students from typically underrepresented populations in study abroad programs. By comparison, nearly 72% of students from the 2015-2016 Open Doors report of American study abroad populations self-identified as White.

Table 3. Participant Self-Reported Ethnicity Compared with Open Doors Data, 2015-2016

Ethnic Background	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
White	12	40%	None provided	72%
Hispanic	5	17%		10%
No response/unknown	5	17%		
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	10%		8%
Multi-racial/Other	3	10%		4%
Black/Non-Hispanic	2	7%		6%
Native American	0	0%		1%
Total	30	100%	313, 415	100%

Over 75% of the participants attended a public institution of higher education, including state universities and colleges and city colleges.

Table 4. Participant College Type

Institution Type	Frequency	Percentage
Public state university	21	70%
Private liberal arts college	4	13%
Private liberal arts university	2	7%
Public state college	1	3%
Public city college	1	3%
Community college	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Participants' majors were also diverse, with a large proportion studying communication, literature, or English; 16% studying international studies or internationally-related fields; and over 20% in STEM fields. Six out of 30, or 20% of the students, also double majored in a second language. This table only counts for one major and includes the first non-language major.

Table 5. Participant Major

Major	Frequency	Percentage
Communication	3	10%
English & Literature	3	10%
International Studies	3	10%
Business & Management	2	7%
Community & Regional Development	2	7%
Japanese	2	7%
Psychology	2	7%
Anthropology	2	7%
Biochemistry	1	3%
Economics	1	3%
Engineering	1	3%
Exercise/Sports Science	1	3%
History	1	3%
International Business	1	3%
International Human Rights	1	3%
Journalism	1	3%
Mechanical Engineering	1	3%
Nanoengineering	1	3%
Political Science	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Travel Destinations

As a group, the cohort studied abroad in 20 countries, with the greatest concentrations of students studying in Western Europe (33%), followed closely by Latin America and Asia (27% each) and the Middle East/North Africa (13%). Ninety percent were studying abroad for a single academic semester, while the rest were living abroad for 1 year. Below is a breakdown of participants' study abroad destinations first by region.

Table 6. Participant Region of Study

World Region	Frequency	Percentage
Western Europe	10	33%
Asia	8	27%
Latin America	8	27%
Middle East/North Africa	4	13%
Africa	0	0%
Eastern Europe	0	0%
North America	0	0%
Oceania	0	0%
Multiple	0	0%
Total	30	100%

The thirty participants in this study studied abroad in 20 countries. Table 7 shows the distribution of student travelers across these countries.

Table 7. Participant Country of Study

Country	Frequency	Percentage
Argentina	3	10%
Chile	2	7%
France	2	7%
Japan	2	7%
Jordan	2	7%
Senegal	2	7%
South Korea	2	7%
Spain	2	7%
United Kingdom	2	7%
Belgium	1	3%
Bolivia	1	3%
Brazil	1	3%
China	1	3%
Denmark	1	3%
Mexico	1	3%
Netherlands	1	3%
Singapore	1	3%
Sweden	1	3%
Taiwan	1	3%
Vietnam	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Over the course of the semester, all but one participant enrolled in college classes for academic credit. One student created his own experience abroad by doing an internship that would count for academic credit. Seventy-five percent of the students that took the survey reported that they were enrolled in a language course while abroad.

Table 8. Participant Language Class Enrollment While Abroad

Enrollment Type	Frequency	Percentage
Enrolled in language class	19	76%
Not enrolled in language class	6	24%
No response	0	0%
Total	25	100%

Of the 30 total participants, a total of seven were selected as key informants and interviewed in depth for 2 hours at the midpoint of the semester. Follow-up interviews were conducted with six of the participants at the end of the semester, with one student unavailable for an interview at the end of the semester abroad. Table 9 provides demographic information from the seven key informants.

The study explored both the processes and written products of study abroad students' reflections in order to understand how students communicated about their experiences to specific audiences through online pedagogical environments while abroad. The study also investigated pedagogical methods to support student learning through reflection across the changing landscape of the study abroad experience. As will be shown, although there was diversity in student backgrounds, from their colleges to their personal histories, there were still many shared themes that emerged from their writings, such as their love for travel, a common desire to find a community of belonging or active

Table 9. Key Informants' Demographic Data

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Home State	School Type	Major	Previous Travel Experience	Country of Travel	Housing Type	Videoconference
Tony	M	Hispanic/Latino	CA	Public state university	English	Yes	Spain	Home stay, Apartment	None
Jake	M	White	FL	Public state college	Literature/Spanish/Theater	Yes	Bolivia	Apartment	Yes
Kane	M	Asian	OR	Public state university	Exercise & Sports Science	Yes	Japan	Dormitory	Yes
Ruby	F	Black or African-American	NY	Public city college	International Human Rights & Counseling	Yes	Senegal	Apartment	Yes
Becca	F	Multiracial	IL	Private liberal arts university	Business Administration/Spanish	Yes	Argentina	Home stay	Yes
Farrah	F	Asian	TX	Public state university	Biochemistry	Yes	Singapore	Dormitory	Yes
Leah	F	Multiracial	CA	Public state university	Biopsychology	Yes	France	Home stay	Yes

creation of such a community, and a general interest in furthering their educational as well as self-development goals.

Chapter IV

JOURNEYS AT HOME AND ABROAD: TRAVELER IDENTITIES

The American study abroad student of the 21st century is one archetype of traveler among many. From forced migrations to pleasure vacations, humans have always traveled over geographical space and time, ranging widely in the speed, coverage, and purpose of their journeys. The epithet for the English word “travel” is reflected in its etymological root, the French word “travail,” or “work” (Leed, 1991). To travel is to journey from one place to another with effort. This chapter brings together stories and examples from 30 American study abroad participants’ written articles and surveys, and interviews with seven key informants, through which participants’ identities as travelers, and their recollections of traveling as a form of intercultural learning, emerge as two central ideas. Identity is theorized as a form of self-perception that is constantly shifting in relation to other individuals, groups, discourses, material, and conceptual understandings (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Urietta, 2007).

As I will illustrate, participants constructed narrative performances of specific traveler identities associated with self-discovery and personal development, continual learning, intercultural encounters, adventurous experiences, and traits such as curiosity and adaptability. Stories of traveling, studying abroad, and adaptation were interwoven into narratives of overcoming socioeconomic, family, or other barriers, learning from people and places around them, and integrating new experiences into their education. Participants described themselves as flexible, mobile, intercultural learners who

continually sought and encountered new challenges in their personal and academic lives. They also positioned themselves in their articles as empowered educators who shared their past and present intercultural experiences and life histories as a way to connect to and motivate others, specifically their distant readers and audiences. Participants' identities were co-created through relationships, interactions, and imagined meanings situated in the figured world of study abroad education, further elaborated in the following section.

Figured Worlds

Study Abroad Education as a Figured World

I explored how participants created meaning and constructed their realities and selves by conceptualizing the phenomena of American study abroad education and the activity of studying abroad as a figured world, a context that shapes specific social and psychological identities, with agreed-upon meanings that map onto cultural and material signifiers (Holland et al., 1998). Figured worlds are socioculturally produced activities “where people come to conceptually and materially/ procedurally ... (perform) new self-understandings (identities)” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 108). Holland et al. (1998) describe these worlds as “socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretations in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others” (p. 52). As a figured world, study abroad education may be considered historically situated and inclusive of processes that are imbued with meaning and socially, physically, conceptually, and materially produced and reproduced.

The broader narrative context and history of studying abroad, or traveling for learning, function as both an imagined conceptual space as well as a space of material and objective reality. There are ancient and contemporary precedents for “studying

abroad”: scholars took study trips to return to their empires and nations with scientific and cultural information, and tradespeople—journeymen—ventured great distances to apprentice with masters. In Europe and later in North America, the Grand Tour provided an opportunity for eligible young gentlemen, and later women, to visit cultural destinations and meet with influential members of high society and the upper class. Formal institutional study abroad programs in the United States began on a small scale in the 1920s, with the first official study abroad program sponsored by the University of Delaware in 1923. Over many decades, these programs grew, expanded, and changed as other colleges and universities, as well as the United States government, promoted student mobility to boost economic productivity and investment, and foreign relations (Hoffa, 2010). At present, American study abroad students are a highly mobile group, with over 325,339 students traveling from different states in the United States to 220 countries in 2015-2016 (Institute of International Education, 2017). The majority of these students continue to be White and female, although this demographic is slowly changing to accommodate student socioeconomic, geographic, and disciplinary diversity (Hoffa, 2007; Thompson-Jones, 2012).

The activity of studying abroad and potential learning outcomes also vary widely by program type and function. Engle and Engle (2003) classify study abroad into several levels of program type and organize student experience from low to high levels of intercultural interaction, characterized by the following variables: (1) length of student sojourn, (2) entry target-language competence, (3) language used in coursework, (4) context of academic work, (5) types of student housing, (6) provisions for guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning, and (7) guided reflection on cultural experience.

The majority of participants in the study were involved in programs with high levels of intercultural interaction, from regular encounters with local people in classroom or residential settings to complete language immersion programs. All but one student

went abroad for 1 semester, and the majority enrolled in classes at universities or colleges where the target language competence was intermediate to advanced, and academic work was conducted in the target language. The remaining student participated in her study abroad program for an entire year. Outside of the academic work required by their own study abroad programs, participants were provided opportunities to reflect upon their experiences by writing for the global education program and its travel correspondence curriculum, which required them to research on local issues and their local surroundings and write articles about their travel and daily experiences.

Travel Writing as a Figured World

Another intersecting discourse and figured world is that of travel writing, or the writing of travel experienced firsthand. Travel writing, in its contemporary form, is a complex genre with an ancient historical legacy, and stories of journeying can be found across civilizations in written narratives (Hulme & Youngs, 2002). According to Youngs (2013), the centrality of genre is essential to understanding travel writing. Genre is “not merely a descriptive label but a way of making sense of the structures by which we describe our surroundings and perceive meaning in them” (p. 2); in other words, it is a dynamic epistemological category. Travel writing is inherently “intergeneric”: it blends personal narrative, heroic quest, scientific realism, observation, and other genres such as the essay, journalism, diary, and ethnographic field note (Youngs, 2013). The corpus of travel writing and associated literature may include fictionalized content about travelers’ journeys, nonfictional accounts of military and commercial ventures, and scientific explorations and expeditions. Thus, the audience for travel writing texts is as vast as the types of texts themselves. Travel writing, once understood in generic terms, can also be defined narrowly: as a work that is based upon the premise that the author has indeed traveled to the places described, in other words, that the journey has been made (Hulme & Youngs, 2002; Youngs, 2013). Much of travel writing’s reception by its audience is

based in its “truth” and verifiability—that the traveler was actually there, that it is an accurate account (Hulme & Youngs, 2002). Travel writing is frequently juxtaposed with the figure of the tourist and the advent of modernity, mass transportation, and democratization of travel—these tourists are searching for constructed versions of authentic vs. the “flaneur”-like solitary, individual traveler with romantic visions/searching for unknown and unspoiled territories. It is characterized by a tension between factual objectivity and subjective sensibilities.

The figured worlds of studying abroad education and travel writing share the experience of the physical act of traveling, the role of the imagination and text in shaping ideas of travel and learning, and other concerns, such as adapting to new contexts, or communicating one’s experiences to multiple audiences. Within this notion of the figured world is the “artifact,” a material and conceptual tool through which meaning is ascribed and identities are produced and performed (Holland et al., 1998), and conceptually borrowed from activity theory and constructivist ideas that explore relationships among actors, objects, actions, and meaning. Artifacts mediate relationships and carry historic meaning, and the curriculum of pedagogically-oriented travel writing was an artifact insofar as it prescribed students’ writings within a structure of digitally-mediated correspondence and focused on sharing participants’ journeys online through specific topical and thematic lenses.

Positioning the Self as a Traveler

Participants applied for the opportunity to write for a global education program as volunteer study abroad travel correspondents. Their writings were structured through guided prompts, and their assignments included observations, opportunities for speculation, responses to classroom instruction and assignments, and interviews with local people. Given that the curriculum was developed by professional global and

intercultural educators, many of the written assignments overlapped with the types of writing recommended by intercultural scholars, including writing about one's observations, applying classroom learning to one's everyday experience, critiques of past experiences or past reflections, and engaging in creative writing aimed at different audiences (Wagner & Magistrale, 1995, pp. 51-54). The curricular structure of the global education program asked participants to engage in a mix of these types of writing, including observations, descriptions of daily life, briefings of travel experiences, and interviews. Participants were asked to consider their audience and their topics from the perspectives of a travel guide, journalist, educator, advocate, and individual with a personal story and unique background, thereby creating the context for an interesting blend of autobiographical travelogue, factual journalistic writing, and introspective journal.

Participants were immediately aware of their new ascribed identities as "Travelers" in initial emails sent from administrators of the global education program. They were informed that they were one "traveler" among a cohort of other study abroad students and fellow travelers writing about their experiences, and a translator of their personal intercultural experiences to youth. Their texts and photo albums were sequenced to make sense to youth of the arc of their journeys, through the initial autobiographical article, to short articles chronicling snippets of their travels, to weekly assigned cultural topics, and a final farewell journal article they would compose before returning to the United States. As will be shown, participants adhered to the guidelines of the curriculum, and thereby conformed to a general identity type of an intercultural curious, independent-minded student traveler.

Introductory Articles

Participants' first opportunities to write about their experiences began after living in their new host environments for several weeks. They were asked in their first

assignment, an introductory autobiographical article, to include background information on their lives, colleges, and major, and to provide their reasons for studying abroad. Going along with the curriculum's label for themselves, they identified themselves as "Travelers" and wrote about their previous travel encounters, experiences with different cultures, perceptions of studying abroad, and learning expectations.

Ninety percent of the participants had previously traveled outside the United States, and thus wrote in their narratives how their perceptions of themselves as travelers were shaped by previous travel experiences and positive associations with what many referred to as "different cultures." Some of their reported travel experiences were in fact major life changes where participants moved entirely from one country to the United States. Within the group, there were four participants who wrote about their birth and origins outside of the United States. Three out of four moved from their countries of origin to the United States as children, while one moved as a teenager.

Bettina introduced herself as "running barefoot and chasing chickens" in the Dominican Republic. She left at age 3 to move to Boston, where she made friends and picked up English quickly in her new environment, and described her imaginations of college as a place where she was "free on [her own], independent, and seeing the world outside of the U.S.," with "college being [her] ticket." Her diverse life experiences and interest in understanding the motivations behind speech and behavior contributed to her enthusiasm for her studies in communication. Bettina described wanting to study in Brazil because she studied and fell in love with the Portuguese language and wanted to immerse herself in a new culture. Similarly, Manny, a Mexican American engineering student, wrote about how he left his family in Mexico at a young age to live in Nevada and pursue a better education across the border. Travel was part of his personal narrative of "adventure" seeking in pursuit of self-betterment and achieving an engineering degree. He described "challenging" himself to visit England, where he could fulfill his dreams of working as an aerospace engineer. Jane moved from the Philippines to the United States

and later traveled extensively in the United States and in other countries with her missionary parents, while Ruby left her birthplace of Ghana as a teen and moved to New York City. The latter prided herself on having the “opportunity to experience both cultures” of Ghana and the United States, which then “sparked an interest to study other cultures,” including learning the French language and culture. Three other participants, Bailey, Kane, and Nikki, had previously attended overseas study programs in high school or college with positive outcomes. Their experiences making new friends, gaining new knowledge about other parts of the world through firsthand experiences, and seeing how differently people lived inspired them to return abroad for additional learning opportunities. Participants with existing travel experience deeply identified with adapting to change. In all of these examples, they wrote about being primed to travel through prior travel, interaction with culturally different contexts, and enjoying the challenges and the embodied experience of living and learning in a different place.

Dreaming of Travel and Early Influences

For other participants, imagining traveling was just as important as taking actual travel experience in their introductory written narratives. According to Appadurai (1996), imagination helps humans and institutions develop “scripts for possible lives and connections across cultural borders” (p. 3) and may be thought of as a social practice that is supported by changes in migration, technology, and media, making it possible for humans to imagine relationality beyond the nation-state level and explore the connections between local and global phenomena. Several participants revealed that their interest in traveling and their belief in the possibilities of travel to introduce them to new perspectives had begun far in advance of their decisions to study abroad. Repeatedly, they wrote about dreaming and imagining that travel was a possibility from an early age. Only four participants wrote that they had never left the country prior to their semester abroad, but they had ideas about their travels. These students were open about their fears

and excitement: Stephy predicted that her time abroad would be filled with “interesting people, new foods, new exciting knowledge and traveling adventures.” Cass came from California, had never traveled, and wanted to go to Belgium because her great-grandparents had once lived there. Her trip to Europe fulfilled her “dream of visiting many cities and countries.” Ryan described how his “fascination for the Japanese culture” began at age 6 when his mother bought him the film *Godzilla*. He sought out Japanese anime in cartoons and books, and studied Japanese later on in college with the goal of developing fluency while abroad.

Like Ryan, participants wrote about how having an interest in different cultures had been imagined and rooted in their consciousness for many years, particularly through encounters with foreign languages in class or media, through storytelling, and friendships. Many carried these interests into their undergraduate academic careers and majors. Becca wrote about how she first learned about traveling from an Irish storyteller that visited her elementary school classroom and sparked her interest in imagining life in different places, which led her to learn Spanish. Kane, another participant from a small town in Oregon, found an interesting community of international students at his college and wanted to travel to Japan in order to speak with these friends in their native tongue. Bailey also imagined traveling outside of her small town “to see the world, discover new cultures, and meet new people,” and envisioned making her dream happen. Although Bettina enjoyed her life in the United States, growing up, “all [she] could imagine was being on her own, independent, and seeing the world outside of the U.S,” with college being her “ticket to see the world.”

Nikki traced her travel lineage back to her family, who had emigrated to the United States, and wrote about satisfying her initial desires to travel through science, since her family did not have money to take her on trips abroad. She described herself as a “scientific traveler” who once visited London on a school trip, and then decided to travel there to pursue serious engineering studies and learn about design and problem solving

from a different perspective. Participants' perspectives resonated with theorizations of imagination as a form of moral and intellectual labor. In the case of the participants, they authored their lives as risk takers.

Expectations of Learning

Nearly all participants developed a personal pedagogy as a result of their travels, and in doing so articulated high expectations for the kinds of learning they would gain through their study abroad program. The majority of participants discussed how they valued travel and studying abroad as a pathway for gaining cultural openness. They constructed travel as a normative value, emphasizing that by traveling, people could become more "open". This was constructed in terms of taking risks and leaving the safety of home, and being more open to contrasting perspectives and lifestyles. Several participants wanted to leave in order to get distinctly "different" experiences that they would not have in their home—as Bettina stated, to be fully "immersed in culture and enjoy every minute of it." In a sense, these students were actively searching for contexts of cultural difference. As a group, their goals included making new friends and meeting new people, trying new foods, exploring destinations, and improving their language skills as some of these goals. Eighty percent of the participants prefaced their self-introductions as wanting to gain language proficiency, and in the survey, 96% of the students reported taking courses in a second language while abroad.

Participants were a highly motivated group who reflected traditional images of academically engaged students, and they also contextualized their journeys in their writings from their academic pursuits, anticipating that the disciplinary knowledge they would acquire while studying abroad would help them advance professionally. Becca and Dan wrote about having an international business orientation and wanting to learn Spanish and Vietnamese, respectively. Bailey, a cultural anthropology major, had previously studied in Oman and wanted to improve her Arabic and knowledge of the

Middle East by studying in Jordan. Ruby chose to study in France because she had never been to Europe and wanted to improve her fluency in the French language to advance in a career in international law, human rights, and diplomacy. She had previously lived in an African country, although not a Francophone African country, and wanted a new experience.

Other participants, particularly those majoring in healthcare and sustainable development, explicitly linked the need to travel for study with their desire to help local communities abroad. Alyssa traveled to Denmark to understand the Danish welfare system, a “completely different way of seeing health care,” where she took classes in medical practice and healthcare, applied psychology, and the psychology of endings while studying directly under doctors in Danish hospitals. Leah wrote about considering a career in international medicine and working as a volunteer for NGOs in Senegal. Steve had a deep interest in the relationship between food production and consumption. He grew up on a farm in rural Idaho and wanted to learn different farming techniques in Senegal, a country rich in agricultural production and techniques, in order to improve the quality of life in both places.

Several participants wrote about wanting to work with diasporic communities upon their return to the United States. Sue’s travels to Mexico fit with her plan of becoming a doctor and her particular interest in poverty and health conditions of migrant workers in the central valley of California, and how they came from Oaxaca, the state in Mexico she was visiting. She wanted to learn how the healthcare system in Mexico aided workers and, as she put it, to discover “why people were leaving Oaxaca to do really hard work in California for little pay, and how that affect[ed] their health.” Brittney, a participant studying to become a physician’s assistant, wanted to learn Spanish in order to help more patients in the United States.

Interestingly, three of the four science and engineering students in the cohort selected to live in English-speaking countries, including the United Kingdom and

Singapore. These participants described enrolling in extremely intensive STEM+ programs at home and abroad. In an interview, Farrah, a biochemistry major, discussed how her major requirements had to align more with her studies in the United States than students with more flexible requirements, and that it had been difficult for her to negotiate studying abroad with her advisor. As a group, they described going abroad with expectations to work hard, to learn, and to enjoy themselves in the process, but also to return to the United States with knowledge that would strengthen their career paths.

Traveling and Privilege

Identity is relational and situated between the tension of people's perceptions of themselves and others, and their actual lived realities of power and privilege that may include discrimination, prejudice, and other responses (Holland et al., 1998). Within their ascribed contexts, participants embraced the identity of being self-made travelers. Participants' experiences, as they were narrated in their written articles, included descriptions of how they moved outside of standard narratives of travel as a privilege available only to individuals with wealth, or to non-minority students or non-science students. one's perception of one's place, or affirmed or negated by the actions of others.

Participants described moments where dimensions of their traveler identity intersected with how they thought about themselves in a figurative sense (a storytelling, conceptual, and narrative sense) and a positional sense that brought to light their status or social rank through lived interactions and experiences with others (Holland et al., 1998). As mentioned earlier, the cohort was identified from a government standpoint as eligible for federal aid and scholarship funding. As a point of comparison, 95.5% of federal grant recipients' families had an annual gross income of \$50,000 or less in 2015-2016, and these participants all belonged in this category. Compared to the national demographic of study abroad students, the cohort represented greater numbers of minority (non-White) students. Historically, the ratio of White students to non-White student participants in

academic study abroad students is disproportionately high, with over three-quarters of White students making up the overall study abroad demographic in the past decade.

Traveling to study abroad in an academic sense, like students' undergraduate education, was closely associated with personal effort, financial aid, and institutional and social support. The act of leaving home and college was viewed as a personal accomplishment—something they experienced obstacles to attain, but ultimately found reward in doing so. As several participants wrote, they “could not believe [being in another country was real]” and that they were able to travel and could afford studying abroad in another country. The majority of participants went to state-funded schools and worked to support themselves in college. A lack of money was cited by this group as a barrier to travel for the participants in their youth, but these students noted that they did not let this prevent them from seeking out scholarship opportunities and finding emotional and social support from people at home and abroad.

Participants wrote about obstacles they encountered prior to traveling, such as meeting academic requirements while abroad, financing their trip, and obtaining information about academic and other learning opportunities. Bailey, for instance, described herself as a “nontraditional” student who had imagined traveling as a child. She dropped out of college to work when her parents lost their jobs during the economic recession and returned several years later to complete her degree in cultural anthropology. In college, she enrolled in another study abroad programs to Oman before she decided to travel to Jordan to learn Arabic.

Similarly, Becca wrote about being the first to travel in her family and not having money to travel, but not letting these difficulties prevent her from finding opportunities to finance her travels with scholarships. Brittney, a student who described herself as growing up on “wrong side of the tracks,” felt immense gratitude for those who had helped her travel to Argentina for a semester in spite of her impoverished background.

Another participant, Shania, described how studying abroad was worth it because it was an opportunity she had created for herself:

Even though I had to find a way to put the money together for this experience, and leave my loved ones back home, I know that I would probably never get an opportunity to live in Paris like I'm doing right now. I wanted to do this for myself because I felt everything I did back home was for the people that I love. The decision to study abroad is giving me the chance to learn more about myself, and to meet new people as I go.

Holland et al. (1998) discuss how individuals can experience “moments of disruption” when they see themselves in relation to their figured and relational identities, as such identities exist within a specific figured world. In such instances, individuals see themselves as they have been self- and externally constructed and work to dismantle or renegotiate their position within the figured and social world, thereby demonstrating their agency amid strong matrices of power. For the participants, studying abroad was an act of empowerment, and sharing their stories operated as a way to reaffirm their decisions and their re-figured, re-positioned identities.

Although the study did not focus on gender as a dimension of participants' writing and travel experiences, it is worth noting that several of the female participants wrote about traveling alone, the freedom they experienced when traveling, and also disrupting narratives of appropriateness. Brittney, a student in Argentina, wrote two separate journal articles called “How to Survive Road Trips” and “Can Women Travel Alone?” In these articles, Brittney discussed the social and group dimensions of traveling based on her personal experiences taking a road trip with all-female acquaintances that she trusted. Traveling enabled her to feel independent and to break stereotypes. Although she felt scared, she kept an “open mind” about the places she traveled to, and the unpredictability of weather and other factors. She wrote about learning how to effectively travel with a group by remaining flexible with planning and journeying with interesting, trustworthy companions. She also discussed the experience of traveling alone, having “street smarts,” and noticing her surroundings when going home in the evening or walking around

Buenos Aires. Her articles suggested that attitudes of courage, interpersonal skill, and her self-reported “open mind” contributed to successful travel experiences.

Another female participant, Stephy, characterized her experiences of getting lost frequently while traveling in Sweden as “part of the adventure” of her overall study abroad journey. She traveled to Stockholm, Malmö, and other cities by herself and met many other travelers along the way who helped her with directions or suggestions. Vicki described how the best part of studying abroad in the Netherlands was making her own decisions, “choosing the countries [she] visited and how to use her free time.” For Stephy and Vicki, the experience of “adventuring” and “exploring” new places abroad, and even getting lost, had parallels to the choices they made while attending college and taking time to find their academic and intellectual passions. As Bagnoli (2009) notes, traveling, and in particular backpacking, can define “identities of resistance” among women, and the experience of freedom from stereotypical gender roles (p. 342).

Critical Perceptions of Travel

Although as a group the participants’ predominating concept of identity held to that of the heroic traveler who overcame barriers to visit new places for educational as well as recreational purposes, several participants presented more critical ideas that they associated with travel. These participants thought about the impact of their travel and criticized common study abroad student archetypes and tourist archetypes. Returning momentarily to some of the historic and theoretical ideas surrounding discourses of travel writing, Hulme and Youngs (2002) note that much of travel writing’s authority came from its independent perspective and objective truth-seeking goals, although these projects were subverted in contemporary travel writing that sought reflexivity and self-referentiality. Several students subverted the idea of being experts and completely objective recorders of their experience. Instead, they noted ideas of power difference and

highlighted some of the ways others might externally perceive them with an attempt to understand rather than judge such perspectives.

Negotiating Tourist Identities

While living in their new contexts, some of the participants also highlighted tensions between other positional identities, such as that of a “tourist” or an “American,” and the actual activity of traveling. The distinction between traveler and tourist has largely been theorized in the disciplines of cultural anthropology, tourism studies, sociology, cultural studies, and history in terms of differences in performances of temporality; travelers have been frequently portrayed in literature as unbound from time, able to wander, explore, and experience freedom, yet also engaged in physical work and struggle, while tourists have been perceived as maintaining rigorous schedules, mechanistic in their experiences, and focused on consumption but paradoxically engaged in the pursuit of leisure (Risse, 1998). Smith (1992) describes the tourist as the “temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change” (p. 1). As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, travel is characterized historically and in literature by physical work and struggle.

Depending on their environment and present company, participants situated their identities in affinity with or in opposition to tourists. These individuals described how they wanted to distance themselves from preconceived notions of American tourists and students. Nikki, an engineering student, repeatedly referred to herself as a “nontypical” study abroad student because she wanted to immerse herself fully in her studies, connect with locals, and refrain from traveling extensively. She described herself as wanting to be more of a “Londoner” than a “traveler”:

It’s been difficult trying to determine how and if I’ve been taking advantage of my semester abroad. The problem is that the U.S. paints a picture of what it means to study abroad, which is perpetuated by books, the

media, and movies. You learn about a new culture, have a blast traveling, touring the sights, making international friends, and then come home. It's been hard to reassure myself that this is not **the** study abroad experience, but simply one study abroad experience among many. I came to my semester abroad with different goals in mind than most. I'm not just here for the culture, but also for the classes. The modules I'm taking here aren't offered in any form at my home college, and they are directly related to my Engineering, Physics, and Design degree.... It's been hard to admit this to myself, but I'm not studying abroad so I can travel. Yes, it's a convenient time in my life to do so, but I'd rather try to assimilate into the London culture, instead of inundating myself with so many others. I want to be a Londoner, make friends with my classmates, and dedicate my time to these endeavors rather than exploring yet another city for 2 days, where I'll get no glimpse into the country's culture, but merely see the shallow tourist layer. What I'm saying is, I've had to convince myself that my decision to travel less frequently than others and put extra time into my coursework is okay. This is **my** study abroad experience.

For Nikki, her experience abroad to England enabled her to take classes that were advanced, and to experiment in a different setting without feeling the pressures at her normal institution. She also wrote at length about the community of British and international friends she made and the close relationships that were fostered at school and over meals in her dormitory. Her identity was that of an engineering student, and her desired identity one of a "Londoner" with local knowledge, obligations, friendships, and commitments.

Another student, Tony, questioned the assumption that movement and travel led to expanded worldviews by drawing on his own experiences feeling alienated and encountering tourists and non-critical study abroad students. Tony was a first-generation student whose family had come to the U.S. from El Salvador. Although he grew up in a family that spoke Spanish, he did not embrace his Spanish identity until college, when he became politicized and grew into a social justice activist, learning from his peers and from his classes. On his campus, he interned for a Black and queer publication. In his introductory article, Tony wrote about wanting to learn about his Latino heritage by traveling abroad and gaining proficiency in Spanish.

Tony spent the first month in Cadíz, Spain, in an intensive language program, where he felt lonely and found difficulty with the complete Spanish immersion. His journey continued to present challenges in finding a sense of place, identity, and a sense of community. When he moved to Madrid, he struggled to find an apartment until he was assisted by one of his university professors, a local Madrileño. Later, he traveled extensively throughout Spain and Western Europe during his study abroad semester. In another article, he described how the city of Barcelona was filled with tourists who wanted to shop at Zara and asked his readers to consider the impact these visitors were making on the local communities of Barcelona, who had been pushed to the exterior of the city.

In his written articles and interviews, Tony repeatedly discussed the importance of being critical of the study abroad experience and the need to think about the impact of study abroad on local communities. He posed the question in one article, “What does it mean that I can go to most countries in Europe and be sure that these places will be able to accommodate me as an English speaker?” He also felt constrained by the topics of the global education program, and what he perceived he could or could not write about to his readers. In an interview, he described wanting to write about being a queer Latino man from a country that was colonized by Spain, but not knowing how to introduce complex topics to his student readers. He described this as a struggle with ideas of “appropriateness”:

I’ve been thinking a lot about too like what’s considered appropriate for younger audiences. um because like for me coming to Spain as like a person from a country that was colonized by Spain that can like bring up some weird feelings for me sometimes and like I want to share that in some way but I don’t know how to share that with a younger audience.

Tony also wanted to share his reflections on the impact of studying and traveling abroad with his fellow sojourners in his study abroad program, but found that they were not interested in having such conversations. This was a point of sadness and alienation for

him, since he was interested in self-critique and reflection and felt that the cohort were only interested in superficial recreational reasons for studying abroad.

Similarly, Jake wrote about feeling “different” and being a “stranger” who was stared at constantly. Separately, in an interview, Jake also described how it was difficult at first to relate to some of the other American journalist interns living in the shared program house, and feeling uncomfortable because he was constantly scrutinized by local Bolivians because of his Whiteness and furthermore his unusual appearance. He wore items like “pink pants” and “a turquoise feather earring,” which only added curiosity and judgment by local people, from “old people” to staring children who had never seen someone like him before. In his article, “The Joys of Being a Stranger,” Jake described the phenomenon of negotiating different identities depending on his location and company:

Living here in La Paz, I feel like I am part of many communities. First, I live with my fellow journalists from all over the world: places like New Zealand, Britain, and Italy. Secondly, every day I’m out walking the streets of my neighborhood, Sopopachi, where I encounter familiar faces and familiar places. And thirdly, sometimes I live as a Bolivian does, and sometimes like a tourist.... When I visit tourist areas, it’s easy to feel like an American. It’s even easier to resort to speaking English with my friends, the interns. But the most rewarding experience, is when I’m out in La Paz, speaking Spanish and taking on the city.

However, Jake also described in “The Joys of Being a Stranger” and a later interview how he adapted to these situations by remaining flexible in his behaviors and attitudes, and thinking about how he could relate to people rather than feeling different, in spite of their perceptions of him. He later wrote about enjoying the company of his fellow journalists, especially in their daily lunch ritual involving shared meals and conversation. He tried to find humor in the situation of staring by rationalizing the behavior of children staring as something they did because “they were not socialized to look away” and staring back at them or making funny faces to make them laugh. He maintained his unusual sense of personal style while also acting in a friendly manner to locals, making

connections with his neighbors, and speaking in Spanish as much as possible. He concluded in “The Joys of Being a Stranger” that by observing commonalities between himself and other Bolivians who, like him, mutually appreciated the act of “popping a squat and eating saltenas,” he was able to feel more comfortable and “at home” in his position as a stranger. He also talked about how it was more important to consider people’s differences rather than their similarities because, as he perceived, it was in recognition of differences that global issues and conflict would start to be addressed—not in a blind belief in the unity of people.

To summarize, the overall cohort identified as independent travelers and learners who had organized their own study abroad experiences around a keen awareness of existing perceptions of studying abroad and student travel narratives. Although the majority reported feeling confident and satisfied, even empowered by their traveler identities, others found perceptions of studying abroad and travel troubling and at odds with aspects of their experiences and identities. To an extent, their reflections were examples of the enmeshment of figured and positional identities: they were able to see stereotypes of American study abroad students or international tourists in their new environments. For instance, Jake, Tony, and Nikki represented some of the different ways that participants negotiated their identities abroad. Their student and traveler identities intersected with other dimensions of identity, such as gender, ethnicity, and, for Nikki, discipline of study. Because of the curriculum’s focus on encouraging young students to grow in curiosity and interest in distant places, it is possible that only a minority of participants reflected in their written articles on questions of how studying abroad and traveling could be approached critically, and as something with a potential negative impact for local communities.

In the examples above, participants positioned themselves as intercultural learners and self-empowered advocates and educators of travel while they were on their journeys. Depending on the context, they also portrayed themselves as serious students embarking

on early career development, tourists among other American or international students (whether or not they wanted to be), and critical, reflective thinkers who challenged existing labels or ideas of studying abroad. The next section addresses how participants wrote about travel in relation to learning.

Educational Travel

Educators have frequently posed the question: What do students learn through traveling? In an ideal situation, traveling provides opportunities for applying content knowledge, which educators must capitalize on to help students recall and interpret beyond the actual experience itself. In a study by Laubscher (1994), students reported that travel contributed significantly to their learning while abroad; however, in interviews the researcher discovered that many participants held stereotypical views of particular places because their travels led to short impressions of places rather than experiencing any type of deep connection. From these conclusions, Laubscher warned against the possibility of travel as only enabling a superficial form of learning.

Separate to their discussions of travel and its association with privilege, participants described their actual travels and how they were actively learning in the process. Given the focus of the curriculum on sharing travel experiences, participants wrote articles about trips taken within and outside of their host countries. The majority of the participants in the sample studied abroad in Europe, and all of these participants wrote about visiting at least one additional European country during the weekends or holidays. All of the participants reported journeying throughout their respective countries for leisure, and 19 reported traveling to other countries at some point during their semester-long programs.

Participants' articles demonstrated that their journeys were helping them learn about cultural differences and remain flexible, adaptable, and open in new situations. In articles that were written after their introductions, participants wrote about taking shorter

day trips in their immediate geographical surroundings and participating in lengthier extensive domestic travel and international travel experiences.

Their trips were significant in different ways, from offering participants opportunities to visit important sites, improve their traveling skills, and feel empowered, or change their perspectives. As a group, participants wrote about seeing popular tourist sights such as museums and national monuments in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and South America. They attended school trips with classmates to local cities, farms, parks, temples, and other places of historic, religious, and cultural significance.

Sometimes these travels were explicitly educational field trips insofar as they were structured learning experiences that were part of their academic curriculum. As part of an internship with an environmental non-profit, Emilia, a sustainable development major, visited a water basin in Atacama, Chile to study water use and drought. In Jordan, Ana went to a refugee camp and felt compelled to write about the differences between America and Jordanian refugee policies in one of her later journal articles. Another student visiting Jordan wrote about spending 1 week with a family in the desert and living a nomadic lifestyle. Participants traveled to different cities and noticed variations in geography, flora and fauna, cuisine, language, and population. Other trips impacted participants' perspectives on U.S. foreign relations; Jake, for instance, traveled to a distant city in Bolivia to visit a coca farm for an article he was writing. He wrote to the students about how differently coca was treated in Latin America regarding its medicinal and sacred properties, and how it was criminalized in the United States solely for its association with cocaine.

Traveling Educators

Travel was perceived by the participants as a pathway to access to new cultures and experiences, and a form of personal achievement. Participants also explained how similar opportunities could be available to everyone, including their readers, through hard work

and access to institutional and social resources. In their digital writings, they embraced their ascribed identities and roles as traveler-educators and inspirational role models to young people. In interviews, they cited that writing to younger students, particularly, brought meaning to their experiences.

Some of the participants approached writing about travel and educating their readers in a didactic way. Farrah and another participant, Leah, described in interviews how they wanted to introduce students to new ideas about culture, fight prejudices as well as clarify stereotypes about specific places, and generate enthusiasm for traveling.

Farrah represented a very unusual demographic of study abroad student insofar as she was a STEM major, minority female who was traveling to the non-European country of Singapore. She came from a Southeast Asian background, grew up in the United States, and had extensive travel experience. Like many of the other key informants, Farrah narrated her life story in an interview and also in her articles as one characterized by overcoming barriers. She moved at a young age from the Northeastern United States to the deep South and encountered prejudice post-9/11 because of her Muslim background. She had encountered bias and discrimination in the United States because she wore a headscarf, but did no longer.

Farrah spoke of wanting to help students to believe that travel, attending college, and studying abroad were available to them and that they could feel empowered. She had personally experienced constraints upon traveling because of her socioeconomic background. She experienced many challenges studying a STEM field as a female and encountered further challenges when she expressed her interest in traveling abroad as a biochemistry major with many requirements and lab work. However, she did not let these barriers deter her and demonstrated resourcefulness and informed risk-taking when she decided to go on her journey. Studying abroad was a nontypical, nonlinear path from her biochemistry degree. She found out about the opportunity to study abroad at a university in Singapore. She was able to take courses there that were compatible with her

demanding biochemistry degree, and she took on the opportunity in spite of her family members, who discouraged her from traveling alone.

Farrah's primary desire in writing for the students was to help them develop an awareness of cultural difference as something normal and not "exotic." She was drawn to studying abroad in Singapore because she perceived it to be a place of ethnic diversity, and a celebration of multiculturalism and sensitivity to different cultures in ways she had not experienced in the United States. She communicated this rich interaction of cultures in Singapore and beyond by writing about the popular everyday street food called "rojak," a blend of foods, the four national languages of Singapore and different ethnic minorities, her travels to Cambodia and Vietnam, and differences between the American and Singaporean education system.

She described in an interview that she wanted to teach students about cultural diversity through her writing, and the importance of communicating with different people:

I want to show that like just you know just because a person is different from you doesn't mean that they're like not a person they're not as good as you or things like that or to students that are from like different cultures that aren't from like you know, a like a typically caucasian or typically american background that they can see there is so much outside in the world and all of that is amazing and beautiful. And it shouldn't be considered *exotic* it's just another way of life it's a lifestyle um that you live and there's a lot of things out there and we should be able to appreciate them without like being antagonistic and things like that. Um Yeah I think it's really important to learn diversity and like cultural understanding when you're young as well because if you have that when you're young when you grow older you'll be able to understand a lot more situations and like understand other people a lot better. You'll be able to communicate well um in those matters.

Like Farrah, another participant, Leah, wanted to sensitize and educate her readers to the importance of cultural difference. Leah was a student in Senegal who was learning foreign languages and exploring whether she wanted a career in international medicine, and she wanted students to learn from her writing how diverse Africa was, and how much

variation there was even in a single country of Senegal. She talked about wanting to overturn stereotypes of Africans and Muslims.

Participants identified travel's impact in teaching them how to think and behave differently from their initial ideas. They attributed their journey and lessons learned about themselves through interactions with others and adapting to daily life in a strange place. Marianna wrote about struggling with the idea that travel was "being selfish" and "traveling solely for [one's] own benefit [was] really wasteful." However, she concluded that her trip was given meaning by her using the time abroad to "come back a person better fit to help others" because the time abroad had helped her to learn about

listening to understand, not to respond.... It shows respect for other people's beliefs and culture, and helps you personally accept and appreciate differences. That doesn't mean you should never have a response, but it definitely helps to know when it is, and when it isn't, appropriate to place judgment or impose your views on another person.

Another participant, Steve, wrote about how his travels and overall study abroad experience had changed him by introducing him to "the beauty of being uncomfortable ... learning about [his] own culture, making mistakes, laughing, and growing every day." To Steve, travel shaped his views such that what was "uncomfortable becomes comfortable."

Communicating with their distant audiences helped participants evaluate the ways their travels were not only personally significant. Participants communicated the idea of travel as a pathway to gain new and different experiences in the world but also as a means of gaining deeper friendships and relationships and bringing knowledge back to their local communities. It also brought them awareness of how their experiences could be leveraged as a platform for teaching others about the meaning and value of intercultural experiences. This mode of constructing travel experiences to be explicitly pedagogical stands in contrast to sociologist Helene Snee's (2014) accounts of British "gappers"—students who took time off after a period of formal education, usually after secondary schooling, to travel abroad in a "gap year"—and the ways they framed their

travel experiences in their blogs and through interviews. The sojourner-bloggers in Snee's study expressed a desire to engage with culturally different others while abroad, but their travel stories were frequently framed by a "self-referential cosmopolitanism," where they described cultural difference in ways that were primarily exoticizing or removed, or undertaken as part of an experience that would be advantageous in home contexts (p. 159).

Inscribing Travel Identities: Writing the Self as Educator and Advocate

Through lived and imagined ideas of travel, participants constructed specific identities within the broader figured worlds of studying abroad and travel writing. In their online communication with distant audiences of American schoolchildren, the participants wrote about how their initial decisions to travel were motivated by complex personal, social, cultural, and academic factors, which in turn informed their expectations for learning and their actual lived experiences while abroad.

The majority of participants' narratives demonstrated an ascribed value to the experience of studying abroad that was shaped by their existing beliefs in the idea that travel expanded worldviews (and circuitously supported by their ideas that, by traveling, their worldviews would expand further). Both traveling and studying abroad fit into their personal life goals as outcomes of hard work and their current pursuits. Participants associated ideas of travel, traveling, movement, and self-growth with a personal pedagogy that aligned with and amplified their existing knowledge and skills. Discussions of traveling and movement also functioned as opportunities for students to make connections to their past and present experiences, their lives in the United States, and their study and travel sites.

Traveling abroad was an extension of participants' personal histories as well as an ongoing activity that they engaged in multiple times while abroad, whether through trips

with an explicitly pedagogical bent, or other visits to iconic tourist sites, lengthier multi-country tours, or visits to local attractions. Participants in the group possessed high levels of existing travel experience and awareness of cultural differences through school, media, and their own personal experiences. As a group, they were highly “interculturally competent,” yet they still professed wanting to grow in their intercultural learning. Specifically, they posited that traveling would lead to obtaining new skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Several participants’ perspectives supported findings in other studies where student travelers differentiated themselves from “tourists” or visitors with a superficial interest in their surroundings. They described learning how to travel alone or with small groups, how to navigate cities and transportation, and how to negotiate their identity.

Participants also positioned themselves in their writing as advocates for learning through the activity of traveling and identified with their distant audiences based on a shared perception of socioeconomic backgrounds. They questioned ideas of traveling abroad for study and self-development as an elite institution by stating that it was something everyone could and should do, and espoused the rhetoric of travel as an opportunity afforded to everyone, regardless of geographic location, or socioeconomic or ethnic background, including their distant audiences. For the participants, the promise and act of traveling was coextensive with the possibility of social and professional mobility, interpersonal connectivity, friendship, gaining new knowledge, applying existing knowledge to authentic contexts, growing in openness, and experiencing self-transformation. Although they did not call themselves teachers or educators, many described themselves as wanting to educate their audiences about cultural differences in ways they had not encountered in their own schooling.

The next chapter addresses stories of the participants in place, rather than in movement or as they discussed movement, and participants’ descriptions and performances of openness. They wrote about experiencing belonging and receiving openness from people in new homes, communities, and places. In addition, they

demonstrated openness and forms of cosmopolitan communication in their written articles and opportunities to videoconference that will be further discussed.

Chapter V

COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATIVE OPENNESS

This next chapter discusses connection and belonging, two themes in participants' writings. The conceptual lens of cosmopolitan communication and its ancillary concept, communicative openness, guide the narratives of real-life stories and examples from participants' writings and interviews. Defined by Sobré-Denton and Bardhan (2014), cosmopolitan communication is a form of communication that is world-, self-, and Other-oriented and characterized by curiosity and openness. It is a hopeful, deliberative mode of communication that is attentive to power and privilege. Cosmopolitan communication is performed and enacted in spaces of self-transformation where the self and other are distinct, yet interdependent, and it addresses imagined and actual ways of belonging without minimizing the experiences of different lived experiences and the reality of historic and contemporary injustices. The following anecdote told by Maria, a participant in the study, exemplifies this type of communication.

Prior to her semester abroad, Maria was highly proficient in Spanish and had already traveled to many other countries in the world. In Chile, she studied at a university in the capital city and lived at the home of a host family that included parents and siblings, facing challenges common to those leaving home. She characterized her experience living with the host family in one of her journal articles as "lonely" and sometimes "a struggle." Unlike her family in the United States, who congregated in a shared living room during their free time, each member of her host family spent most of

their “downtime in their own rooms.” It was “hard spending so much time in [her] own room” because she wanted to be “social with [her] family ... and culturally there [wasn’t] really an outlet to do that other than weekend lunches.”

In order to counter her loneliness, Maria would talk to her family in the United States via Skype. Her “best memory” of her host family occurred when she chatted via Skype with her mother in the United States, and her host brother Piero walked in and started speaking to her mother onscreen. Maria’s brother in the U.S. then came into the room where his mother was conversing with Piero, and the two brothers began to speak to each other and practice English. Maria translated again, and the two brothers conversed about Minecraft and video games. Her following anecdote illustrates a moment of trans and intercultural connection:

I told [Piero] she didn’t speak Spanish, and so she couldn’t understand him, but my mom tried a few lines she remembered from 3rd grade Spanish like, “Hola, me llamo Diane.” My host brother thought it was funny, and he started practicing his English, which I didn’t even know he was learning! With their basic bilingual skills, and my translation, we all attempted a conversation. It was great fun. Piero and I would laugh at my mom’s attempts at Spanish, and my mom and I were cheering on his English. It was great to see that although there was a language barrier thousands of miles between us, we could all still connect on a really personal level. Moments like that are what keep me sane, laughing, and positive when cultural differences and stressful classes overwhelm me. Feeling a sense of belonging in a Chilean family has made integrating myself into the community and my study abroad experience so much easier and enriching.

Maria tried to see her present situation with cultural, emotional, and social flexibility and an opportunity for her to positively change. She slowly learned how to interact with her host family and negotiate their different ways of socialization, and later wrote in the same journal entry, “Every new situation requires adapting and I think living with a family in a different country has challenged my beliefs, norms, and comfort zone and has helped me learn so much about others.” Maria’s story reveals how she experienced a moment of cosmopolitan communication by connecting to her mother and two brothers through the act of translation and sharing in their attitudes of curiosity and playfulness. Rather than

shooing her host brother Piero out, she allowed the space for change and the unknown to occur, and to experience spontaneous interaction. She valued the connectivity of her two families across difference and described how such moments were crucial in supporting her well-being and social integration. In her story, Maria embodied staying open amidst emotional, linguistic, spatial, and social challenges, and encapsulated different forms of openness.

This chapter is divided into two parts that investigate and identify different yet related instances of openness in participants' interactions and writings. One dimension of Maria's story involves the idea of openness as receptivity; in other words, openness was conveyed through her story as a form of hospitality in the unexpected receiving of warmth and kindness from local people. The first part of the chapter explores this idea from the perspective of participants who communicated to their audiences their experiences as recipients of openness, and seekers of connectivity and belonging. It explores how they framed their sense of social inclusion and belonging through the idea of being welcomed and feeling comfortable.

The second section of this chapter looks at participants' perspectives of performing communicative openness through their experiences of the videoconferences with their distant audiences. Openness is considered as an attitude of curiosity and willingness to engage in new, unfamiliar experiences while remaining sensitive to others' differences. Maria herself performed "openness" by creating a sense of comfort or belonging for her two brothers—her host brother and her biological brother—and their shared and exchanging stories. Similarly, participants as a group wrote about encountering difficult circumstances that challenged their normative values, behaviors, attitudes, and personal standards. I characterize the way they remained flexible to these challenges by withholding judgment, or shifting their ideas to accommodate new perspectives as the practice of "staying open." This separation of these two forms of openness is artificial and intended for ease of reading. In actuality, participants' experiences were obviously

blended: they wrote to and videoconferenced with their audiences during the same period of time they were engaged in everyday interactions, travel experiences, and studies while abroad.

Throughout the chapter, I illustrate across participants' written articles the existence of these different forms of communicative openness. Openness is a challenging concept because of its broadness and frequency of use in cosmopolitan theory and research. I agree with Skey (2012), who states that it is not enough to mention openness in discussions of cultural cosmopolitanism, because it serves as a catchall, and thereby weak analytic concept. This chapter responds to Skey's entreaty to provide conceptual specificity in descriptions and characterizations of openness. As indicated earlier, I locate openness in students' communicative practices and descriptions of their experiences. I argue that openness is a valuable concept because the examples I provide demonstrate how openness can be communicated as a practice but also how opportunities must exist in order for it to be cultivated and to occur. I do not presume that openness exists as an outcome of travel or as consumption of global taste, but rather that it exists within specific conditions.

Receiving Openness

The Need for Home: Hospitality and Warmth as Conditions for Openness

Participants' housing contexts. Participants lived in a variety of housing situations for the duration of their study abroad program experiences. Home stay "calls upon students with appropriate linguistic and cultural skills to function as active members of the family" (Engle & Engle, 2003, p. 13). In home stays, participants were paired with local families and lived in homes while they simultaneously enrolled in and attended class at the local university or other institutions. Home stay was the most represented type of living situation in the cohort, with almost 40% of participants living with host

families. The majority of participants in countries in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East lived in home stay. These students had their own rooms and spoke entirely in the target language/native language of their host families. Almost 30% of the total group of participants lived in dormitories, while the rest lived in off-campus apartments or program houses. Dormitories referred to university-provided housing shared with other Americans, English speakers, and international students, locals, or host nationals. A small number of participants chose to live in their own off-campus residences in the form of privately found apartments. All but one or two of the participants whose study abroad programs operated in Asia or Europe lived in dormitories or apartments with English language speakers and other international students. Other students lived in their own apartments.

Less common living situations included program houses, or institutionally provided housing situations where people from the same study abroad program lived together in a house with housekeepers and/or cooks. There were only two participants in the overall group who lived in program houses. Jacob, the only participant living in Bolivia, was enrolled in a journalism internship program where he lived in a house with other English-speaking interns. Dan, a student in Vietnam, lived with other students from his study abroad program in a shared, institutionally maintained house where they had caretakers and a cook. Two participants reported living in multiple residences over the course of a semester, including a home stay situation followed by an apartment, or home stay followed by dormitory and then an apartment. The table below is based on data drawn from survey responses.

Table 10. Participant Housing Type

Housing Type	Frequency	Percentage
Home stay with host family	9	36%
Apartment	6	24%
Dormitory with international students	4	16%
Dormitory with domestic and international students	3	12%
More than one type of housing	2	8%
Program house	1	4%
No response	0	0%
Total	25	100%

In one of their written assignments, participants were prompted to describe how they were integrating into their respective communities. Students' sense of comfort and belonging and their feelings of being at home were connected to their housing context and level and type of interactions that they experienced in their surroundings. Several of the students focused on the idea of "home" and the process of locating and constructing a home in a new place. They created spaces for themselves to feel at home or a sense of belonging through simple gestures such as decorating their spaces, people, and cultivating a familiar sense of routine. In Sweden, Stephy put "some flowers on the windowsill [of her dormitory room] and some decorations on the wall to make the space feel a little brighter and more like home." For Eve, a student in South Korea, this included taking the same walk every day and buying coffee and pastries. They relied on fellow international students in their dormitories or classes, and described how friends

acted as “family” and lent social support. The participants described different ways to belong, through cooking, socializing, or working together as they interacted with friends, including international students and local students. As Stephy wrote,

A very important part of feeling at home in a foreign country is making friends. Without people to talk to, being away from home can get very lonely. When I arrived in Lund, I began a Swedish language class with the rest of the exchange students from the University of California system. I befriended a few Californians from this course, and we still hang out sometimes. I also have a few Swedish friends that live in my corridor. Having friends that are native to the country I’m in is very cool. It is really fun to talk to people who have different life experiences and perspectives than you have.

Stephy recalled how she felt welcomed by Swedish roommates and other international students when she was invited to a meal upon her arrival, and expressed how she felt “kindness and hospitality on [her] first night in Sweden” and had come to recognize this as something “characteristically Swedish.” In La Paz, Jake noted that one of his favorite things about living [abroad] was eating together with his fellow housemates and having their own kind of “almuerzo familiar (family lunch) ... a time to eat well, talk loud, and laugh louder.” In Chile, Emilia lived in a house with a friend from her exchange program and two exchange students from Austria. She and the other housemates cooked meals, drank wine or barbequed, did homework, shared birthday celebrations, and “sat and chatted for many hours at a time” in a “house that became a home due to the many wonderful moments spent in the house together.” In London, Nikki described how she made “a house into a home” with her flatmates, who functioned as “family” and became a crucial part of “integrating into a new culture.” She turned to her British flatmates “to cheer [her] up or to answer [her] stupid questions about British culture ... without being judged.” They rotated chores, cooked meals together, and spent 2 hours at dinner socializing and unwinding. In late November, she even celebrated “Friendsgiving,” a variation on the Thanksgiving holiday, with her British flatmates and

took time to explain the traditional stories and foods of Thanksgiving to them. She found that

it was wonderful sharing an American tradition with ... British friends, as they've shared and explained so many of their own traditions to us. It brought us closer together, and made us thankful for the friends that we've made, and made me even more thankful for the family that I've found in my flat.

This experience of closeness and family in her flatmates was not normal, as she noted, and perhaps due to the fact that her flatmates were older and more mature, and not “into crazy partying because they were finally away from home and the watchful eye of their parents.”

As Dan stated, the most important reason why he loved living in Da Nang was because of the people, who made his experience “enjoyable ... the program staff, neighbor, and friends all feel like second family here.” Dan wrote about being close to the program staff, who “were willing to do more than they needed to help [him] out” and invited him out for food. As he stated, it helped that he could speak Vietnamese and enjoy chatting with program staff, and he was frequently invited to eat with local friends. Dan represented an individual who was fully integrated in his community. Across these participants' experiences, feelings of being at home and integrating into a community were inseparable from encounters and interactions with their friends, whom they trusted and experienced open and free communication with. Frequently, these trusted individuals were also roommates or fellow dormitory residents.

Home and the Host Family

For a number of students in home stay living situations, interactions with host families included sharing housing and food, but also receiving emotional support and inclusion in group meals, religious and cultural festivities, or recreational and leisure activities. Steve, for instance, found his experience of the Muslim holiday of Tabaski to be rich in significance and a time to bond with his host family. He spent the entire day

eating lamb and other courses, and sipping tea and hearing about his host family's life experiences. Bailey participated in cooking with her host family, as did other students. Participants described experiencing a range of emotions around mealtimes and deep conversations with their host families as a time to appreciate their company and cultural differences, ranging from political life to humor. For Ted, conversations with his host mother and brother during regular mealtimes became a place where he learned much about Argentinean politics and where he shared dimensions of his life in New York City. Ted wrote that he appreciated their "different perspectives" coming from different countries, and found himself "really thinking about what it meant to come from America" and reflecting on how his life would be different after hearing about his host mother's stories about life under the dictatorship in Argentina.

Language proficiency was an important part of belonging; as was sensitivity using language in context. Although daily life in Dakar, Senegal for Steve was quite different from his home and university life in Idaho—from the food to the extreme heat and language differences—he felt connected to his host family and his brother, whom he called his "guide." He related one story where he wanted to compliment his host mother on her cooking by using a Wolof phrase translated as "you have tasty hands." During a meal, Steve mispronounced the phrase, causing confusion and puzzling looks from his host family. After a brief moment, Steve's host brother Chris understood his intended meaning and repeated the phrase in Wolof with the correct pronunciation, causing the family to erupt into laughter. For Steve, such an instance represented a memorable moment where he could laugh at himself and with his family.

The majority of participants who lived in home stay contexts also attributed feeling a sense of trust and care in their surroundings as the basis for meaningful interactions and relationships. They repeatedly used phrases such as "hospitable," "kind," and "warm" to describe the way they were received by their host families and friends. For instance,

Bettina expressed gratitude in her journal entries for her host family, who she felt honestly regarded her fears and concerns:

I also have my host family to thank for my fluency in Portuguese and all the laughs and memories we shared this semester. They taught me how to step out of my comfort zone and use my words to communicate discomfort, confusion or anything I was feeling. I learned how to be part of a family that was not my own and appreciate the difference between our cultures.

Kindness of Strangers

The same participants who described their host families as warm and open also described being recipients of kind acts from strangers. They characterized these interactions using many of the same words to describe the “warmth” and “kindness” of “helpful” strangers. Bettina described how she was moved by the kindness that people in Brazil demonstrated to her and one another while riding the bus—their behavior and sense of consideration was something that she had not even encountered in the United States:

One of my favorite things about Brazil has been the people. They are so kind and hospitable like nothing I’d ever seen before. Some of my most prominent memories are on the omnibus. When the bus was full and there were no more seats available there were people who were sitting down who would offer to carry your bags, or children in their lap so you could have a more comfortable ride home. Living in the U.S. nearly my whole life, I had never seen that. When I was lost in the middle of downtown and asked for directions, people would go out of their way just to show me physically where I was. They would walk me halfway there and some would even take me all the way where I needed to go without having to ask them to.

In many of these instances, participants described entire nationalities as warm and hospitable. Steve characterized his experience of the Muslim holiday of Tabaski as a celebration of the culture of Senegal: “warm and friendly smiles, laughter.” Similarly, Sue observed that the people in Oaxaca, Mexico were “hella nice.” She felt cared for and safe, encountering people who were willing to help or offer “suggestions, food, even though they did not know her,” and she generally observed how kind they were to each

other, and how they pleasantly conversed with one another. Dan personally experienced, as he described, how “Vietnamese culture valued community.” In one of his articles, he wrote about taking a cab back to his apartment, failing to have enough money to pay for the cab, and witnessing a neighbor run outside to help pay for his fare. These participants wrote about how they were helped by family, friends, and strangers, and in some instances generalized this kindness to characteristics of an entire cultural group or nationality.

To an extent, the experiences of warmth and comfort that participants described reflected the needs of the participants themselves, with some participants, such as Maria, needing more interaction with their host families than provided. On the other hand, students with warm host families may have been living with outliers who were particularly accepting in a social context that would have otherwise been not as receptive. Not all of the participants had positive experiences in their host families, and some described difficulty adjusting to living with host families, different mealtimes, missing home, and in particular, having to speak another language. For participants with less fluency, Tony described having to assume a different “persona” to communicate in basic terms, while Kane jokingly wrote about playing charades with a transit worker.

To summarize, the majority of participants found that making themselves comfortable in their living situations was a significant part of their journeys. Interestingly, none of these contexts of warmth as participants described them occurred in formal classroom contexts. They described feeling a sense of communicative openness in safe and shared spaces, such as the dinner table, dormitory common room, or other areas where they could exchange stories, joke, and feel a sense of support and care from their peers or host family members. These were spaces where they could practice their language safely without judgment and learn more about the lives and experiences of others. Collectively, their experiences demonstrated that participants valued and mirrored gestures of openness and caring, and that such gestures of kindness, whether they

occurred through interactions with their newly adopted families, friends, or strangers, brought meaning to their time abroad. In these settings, participants were given a place where their “capacities for dialogue and the respectful imagining of others across aesthetic, cultural, historical, and ideological difference” (Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2010, p. 86) were supported. Their experiences of intercultural interaction also fit into the curriculum’s orientation to characterize travel and studying abroad as safe, inviting, and welcoming.

Opportunities to Practice Openness

This next section addresses how participants communicated with and perceived their distant audiences of American public school youth from this idea of performing openness in their written articles, videoconferences, and selected interviews. I argue that participants demonstrated forms of cosmopolitan, communicative openness to their audience by using invitational language and sharing with their distant audiences ideas about culture, difference, diversity, and national sovereignty.

Audience Awareness

A characteristic of cosmopolitan communication is sensitivity and thoughtful deliberation. For some of the participants, this included careful consideration of their readers during the process of researching and writing their articles and seeking out specific activities to engage their readers. Participants spoke of their weekly article writing as a process that involved planning topics in advance, coordinating travel or communication with their interview subjects, editing, and translating. The curriculum provided participants with opportunities to do things out of the ordinary, such as find local people to interview about their daily lives, or write in detail about first-hand encounters with regional flora and fauna.

By design, participants aligned their leisure and recreational activities with the curriculum topics, sometimes traveling out of their way to specific sites or in order to have writing material. For an assignment where the Travelers were tasked to write about native flora and fauna, Tony asked his fellow Madrileños for help locating an interesting natural area besides local city zoos or parks. With their recommendations, Tony traveled by himself an hour and half outside the city to visit a mountainous area called la Sierra de la Guadarrama and wrote about his observations of local birdlife. He later stated in an interview that he would not have ordinarily partaken in such an excursion.

In Japan, Kane described how he “traveled and saw many parts of the Tokyo area ... adventured all the way to Osaka and up to Nikko.” He described “making every single day an adventure,” and acknowledged to his student readers that they were “part of the reason that [he] explored so much and felt the need to document and photograph [his] memories” for them.

Writing for a younger audience presented some challenges, particularly regarding technicality of language and content. As one participant noted, it involved careful consideration and including the “necessary background information to try and give a sense of the full culture while ... abroad.” Leah described writing for young people as a process of thinking about “age appropriateness and explaining complex concepts in simple ways.” For instance, she interviewed a Senegalese doctor and struggled to explain to her audience what the doctor did to take care of his patients and what types of local illnesses people experienced in Senegal that were different from the United States. In this example, she describes how her interviewee mentioned that he wore a “boubou,” and after a moment of reflection, she realized that such a term required further explaining:

[The students are] not going to know what a boubou is ... so let me try to explain traditional West African clothing. So just like asking a question taking an answer and then expanding on it in a way that kids can understand. Give them a colorful example of what’s going on ... just trying to add definition where I can and explain things where I can so I think there was lot there in terms of explanation.

Several participants described how they chose not to include feelings that were reserved for communication with their family and friends, or their personal diaries. One participant noted that if he had been writing for an older, college audience, he would have included “experiences with various substances, the parties/clubs that I attended, and the hairy situations that I found myself in”; however, for the student audience, he excluded such recollections.

Tony, the participant who had experienced severe loneliness and disconnection from other study abroad students in his program, described how he felt challenged writing about this for students, and how he also felt limited in his ability to talk about the full range of his experiences as a queer man living in a place that had colonized his ancestors.

I don’t know how to approach the topic of depression with a younger a fifth grade audience like people don’t have those conversations.... so it’s like a really weird like new approach for me and also now also how does that like compromise my own identity is like Do I write that I am queer do I write about those experiences in my writing to younger children like is it appropriate like why is it inappropriate and that kind of thing and also like analyzing why do I have to be censored at all.

Tony’s example is notable because he was given the opportunity to be open about his experiences and even recommended to his readers to stay open during challenging moments, and yet, to an extent, his openness was prescribed within the curriculum and his perceptions of “appropriateness.”

Other participants stated that their audiences helped them consider different perspectives and put their ideas in a context where they had to describe and explain ideas clearly. The same student who described not writing about drug use also stated that “writing for a younger audience helped me constantly present my life in a simple, educational way, whose benefits greatly outweigh any of the aforementioned limitations.” Leah identified with her audience and the experience of coming from a low-income

family. Jane, a participant visiting South Korea, acknowledged that her classroom helped her gain purpose and confidence abroad:

The Scholarship and [educational program] helped me to find my courage and strength. At the beginning, I lived through the anxiety of being away from familiar things. However, the anxiety disappeared as I became a middleman for you. When I wrote my articles about life in Seoul, I had a purpose.

Digital Connectedness

Participants' feelings of connectedness and desire to feel supported applied to immediate geographic settings as well as digitally-mediated contexts with their existing communities in the United States. Participants wrote about communicating with their friends and family on a regular basis using social media platforms, phone calls, and email and posting videos and photos of their travels, even multiple times a day. For some students, such as Fatima or Kole, communicating with their friends and family using social media was a daily part of their lives. Nicole, a participant who wrote about homesickness, talked to her family once a week and found that it was "comforting."

Besides writing on a weekly basis, the other part of the curriculum involved videoconferencing with a matched classroom. Of the participants that took the survey, 14 reported that they were matched with classrooms and videoconferenced at least once with their classrooms. Most of these participants only spoke with their matched classroom once. Teachers or teaching assistants in the classrooms scheduled and set up the videoconferences in advance via email. The videoconferences were fairly structured events where, typically, the college student traveler would introduce him or herself, and then answer students' questions one by one. Below is a table of participants and their reported videoconferencing experiences.

Table 11. Participants' Videoconferences with U.S.-based Classrooms

Videoconferenced with classroom	Frequency	Percentage
Videoconferenced at least once	10	40%
Was not matched with classroom	7	28%
Was matched with classroom but did not videoconference	4	16%
Videoconferenced twice	2	8%
Videoconferenced three or more times	2	8%
No response	0	0%
Total	25	100%

For example, in Jake's videoconference, the teacher asked him to share two artifacts with the classroom. He shared a small llama figurine made of llama wool, a tchompa, and a bag of coca leaves with the students. In each case, he described the objects, and their importance to his journey and local culture. He also answered their basic questions about food, language, and holidays and made American, Latin American, and Bolivian cross-cultural comparisons. Students were particularly interested in Jake's Spanish skills, why he chose Spanish, whether he spoke it with an accent, and whether his knowledge of the Spanish language had increased. Many of the other videoconferences were similarly structured, with students asking simple questions and the college student Traveler responding.

Several of the interviewed participants described that the substantive content of the videoconferences was repetitive and unremarkable. Kane found that the participants' questions "weren't [as] deep as they could have been" and that the "students were bored" because of technical difficulties that required them to type out all of their questions

instead of speaking them. Rebekah found the experience “rushed” and that participants asked questions she had already answered in her articles, as well as new questions about “the types of games that Argentinean children play.” In spite of the questions, Becca found that the questions illuminated “some of the things that [she] hadn’t paid attention to, like the kids in Argentina” and felt “more connected to their point of view as children.” Although the data were insufficient to generalize across the cohort, participants such as Jake, Becca, Leah, and Kane, who were interviewed about their videoconferencing and writing experiences, described a sense of connectedness and authenticity in completing their assignments. The experiences created a visible connection to their audiences and reinforced the purpose of their writing and reflections on travel and learning. At their best, these moments were characteristic of cosmopolitan dialogue, providing participants with the opportunity to demonstrate openness, curiosity, and respect within a shared curriculum and environment (Wahlström, 2016).

Farewell Journal Assignments

The final assignment was a farewell article where participants reviewed their experiences and provided advice to their readers. Timed around their imminent departures, the assignment and its prompts generated more personal and sentimental musings on new friendships than were found in previous entries and included participants’ final musings on their surroundings, everyday habits, and general recollections of their experiences.

In these concluding entries, the majority of participants reflected that their writings for the classroom audiences had enriched their study abroad experiences by enabling them to document their trip, particularly through photos, and help them recall parts of their lives that at one point were unfamiliar and now seemed ordinary. They expressed disbelief and surprise at all their experiences, and they wanted to continue to influence others to fulfill their aspirations.

Several participants described how they learned that people were similar in spite of their differences. As Dan put it,

[The Vietnamese] have different languages and different standards of living. Yet, beyond all that, we can see that people in both countries have similarities. Many enjoy going out for a nice meal or hanging out with their friends. We all have our struggles, both as individuals and as a community. What I've learned is that although one person may be called Vietnamese and another American, in the end we are all still people.

Although they identified how different life was in their new contexts, many described imagining connecting to a larger global community, finding connections, in the words of one student, that “transcend[ed] distance and culture.” Participants wrote about growing in a capacity to care for others, including the new friends they made while abroad. As Ryan said,

As for myself I know what the greatest takeaway of my trip has been. I made a lot of friends all over Japan and I miss them badly now. There are literally billions of potential friends waiting to be made, countless places where memories can be made, and an unlimited potential to grow within all of us.

Participants encouraged their distant audiences to continue dreaming, and give themselves the flexibility to make mistakes and search for their career and personal interests. They also made gestures to their audiences and indications of caring for their audience. Leah, a self-described “non-emotional person that like[d] kids,” stated in an interview that she “needed to connect to people in order for [her] work to be meaningful otherwise it [would be] an annoyance.” Although she had originally found writing for the global education program and her classroom a nuisance that was actually contradictory to the Senegalese value of “living in the present,” she appreciated its value only after having the videoconference with her matched classroom. As she commented, the experience “triggered a connection” between her and the students that helped her to know the “context of the classroom, the ethnicity of the kids, who she was talking to ... to say something meaningful to them.” She described her last written assignment as “by far the

most heartfelt thing I've ever written ... because I'd actually seen some faces and heard voices." Leah concluded her Farewell journal entry with one of her favorite French expressions—"On est ensemble," translated as "We are together"—and urged her student readers to "support each other now." As Jane commented, "Life is about taking risks, learning, applying knowledge, and then sharing it with the world" to "bridge gaps in the human family."

Open to Humans, Connected to Others

This chapter identified occurrences of cosmopolitan openness in American study abroad students' writings and in their descriptions of videoconferencing with classrooms of American schoolchildren. A common theme of participants' writings was the need for a comfortable place where they felt like they belonged and could connect to people, including their online audiences, local people, or their families and friends back home and abroad. In their final farewell articles and in their entries on integrating into their communities, participants found meaning through the maintenance of personal relationships and spaces where they could share open conversations with trusted others.

They expressed gratitude and acknowledgement of the openness and receptivity exhibited by their hosts, friends, and locals. They also exhibited a similar attitude of cosmopolitan openness with their audiences by relating a sense of gratitude and connectedness.

Interestingly, I also found that some of the participants who wrote about having willingness and a desire to connect with other people, regardless of cultural differences, and great affect—those who felt like they were part of something bigger than themselves—still wrote from a place of cultural generalization, albeit positive cultural stereotyping, and a place where they saw themselves in these moments of connection as part of a broader sense of humanity regardless of location. It was unclear why these

participants made broad cultural generalizations and positive stereotypes, but it may have been partly for ease of explaining daily phenomena or cultural norms to their readers. It is possible that these participants may have been thinking more deeply about issues of class or certain types of inequality that were created through colonialism, but that they did not find it the right time and place for them to be writing about such topics in depth, since they perceived their audiences to be young people.

The implication of this finding is that writing about experiences for authentic audiences can be a vehicle of cosmopolitan communication, and affirming certain positive perceptions or cultural generalizations at the cost of more critical analysis. Another learning from this is the significance of connection: students abroad want to connect with others; they want to be able to learn from them and to feel safe and trust others. Interpersonal connection and social support are what make study abroad students' experiences meaningful (Gemignani, 2009).

The following chapter addresses these ideas of change, affect, and processes of reflection in greater depth.

Chapter VI

REFLECTION, INTERCULTURAL LEARNING, AND MOMENTS OF CHANGE

The previous two chapters explored the traveler identity orientation of the participants and looked closely at two instances of cosmopolitan communication, including the ways participants received openness from culturally different others, and how they themselves practiced openness with their online audiences. This next chapter focuses on the different ways a smaller number of the participants reflected on their processes of learning. I begin by reviewing the concept of reflection and the connections between reflection and intercultural learning. Specifically, I locate examples of reflection in places where participants identified intercultural perspectives that challenged their ways of thinking or behavior and helped them think about the connections between local, national, and global concerns. I also locate students' reflective moments in instances where they wrote about changing their existing perspectives to accommodate new experiences and knowledge.

As was introduced in Chapter II, intercultural learning is “the acquisition of knowledge and skills that support the ability of learners to both understand culture and interact with people from cultures different from their own” (Lane, 2012, p. 1618). Reflection is the metacognitive process of relating thought and action to each other (Whitney & Clayton, 2011). In theoretical literature that explores the intersection of reflection and intercultural learning, reflection is frequently schematized along an axis, spectrum, or rubric with surface-level descriptions of experience or simple comparisons

of cultural difference, such as observations of different behaviors, at one end. At the other end are indicators of deeper reflection that include self-examination and interrogation of personal beliefs, assumptions, misconceptions, and attempts to connect new ideas or knowledge with larger theories or abstract concepts (Anderson & Cunningham, 2010; Bagnall, 2005). These spectra are similar to developmental models of transformative learning, including one continuum model posited by Cunningham and Grossman (2008) that includes six levels of development: gains in knowledge, changes in attitude, understanding of different perspectives, development of a structural understanding, development of a self-understanding, and changes in frames of reference. For learning to occur in these models, there is an assumption of change. However, these transformative and developmental changes may be contextually bound and need not occur in a predictable, linear way.

Since I examined participants' writing over time, I explored how they wrote about their intercultural learning through the lens of process and possible change, although I did not assume that change in their intercultural perspectives would automatically occur over the course of their time abroad, or that they would then reflect about their experiences and their perceived or actual changes through their writing. I located moments of change as they described them in their writing and instances of deeper reflection exemplified in their abilities to identify their own cultural perspective, evaluate cultural difference from local frameworks, acknowledge ambiguity and tensions across different perspectives, and withstand or refrain from cultural judgment when encountering the unfamiliar or perspectives that directly challenged their own. Throughout the chapter, I also explain how aspects of the global education curriculum and online pedagogical context might or might not have played a role in facilitating such change.

Surface Comparisons of Cultural Difference

All of the participants were required to write about broad cultural topics such as “Food,” “Traditions,” “Transportation,” or “Nature” in articles called “Field Notes.” They identified related subtopics and provided examples of personal experiences within these broad categories that were representative of their new cultural context. Guided by the prompts, participants described having diverse, regionally and nationally specific experiences. These experiences ranged from eating herring from a street vendor, jumping on short buses or minicabs, visiting a night market, learning new greetings or familiarities, or learning how to dance a traditional folk dance such as the cueca. These short “field note” entries required participants to describe in detail what their sensory experiences were regarding their selected subtopics, such as food, transportation, local flora and fauna, schooling, local traditions, community issues, and other topics, and how these experiences connected to the local environment.

Throughout their writings, the majority of participants made simple cultural comparisons where they observed and recorded differences in behavior or other dimensions of culture and society that were externally or visibly different, such as food, holidays, transportation, clothing, greetings, language, or housing. Examples of description, but not reflection, occurred when participants wrote about their experiences or observations in terms of shock or surprise, or judgment, or made cultural comparisons without going further into explanation for differences.

For instance, one participant demonstrated this type of surface-level cultural comparison by writing about the “cultural shock” she received when she discovered that she was expected her to bring her own bags to carry groceries at the French markets, or else she would have to pay for bags. She described “quickly learning to bring a bag” and adapting to the importance of recycling. However, in her entry, she did not go deeply into ideas of conservation, or reasons for different behavior and exceptions. Similarly, another participant, Jane, brought up her observations of the cultural differences in Korean

culture “keeping pale skin” by using special creams or carrying umbrellas for protection against the sun. She noted:

In my opinion, I feel that social life in South Korea is mostly about fitting in. Looking like your friends, with the same hairstyle and clothes, is a good thing. If you look different, you will not fit in. It is not good in Korea to stand out. It is important to be part of the group here. It seems like appearances mean a lot!

Both participants’ writings remained at the level of generalization and did not include nuance or evaluation of similar or different ways of acting in the United States or South Korea. Jane, for example, did not check her observations with local people to provide further insight. In the case of both of these participants, there were no further attempts in their entries to investigate more deeply into ideas of culture or implication and thinking more deeply about cultural stereotyping, one’s position as a study abroad sojourner or foreigner. Furthermore, neither participant engaged with cultural difference in a critical way throughout the rest of their journal entries. They observed differences and wrote about their experiences primarily in a descriptive, but superficial way. A lack of language proficiency and pre-existing training or coursework on cultural communication or critical perspectives on culture may also have contributed to surface-level writing.

Stereotypes and Shifting Perspectives

There were opportunities in the curriculum, particularly in the open-ended journal topics, for participants to write more freely and less prescriptively. Four journal topics particularly lent themselves to making connections between experiences and larger, more abstract ideas involving history, culture, and geography of their context. These topics were “Changing Perspectives,” which included describing one’s changed perspectives and encounters with stereotypes, the “Communities” journal topic that asked participants to select an issue facing local communities and their Farewell entry, and the entry on the Environment.

One of the open-ended journal assignments about perspectives required the participants to consider the following questions in their responses: “What are some stereotypes that you better understand now by living in a different country? How has your perspective changed during your study abroad?” Twenty-one out of the 30 participants selected to write about this topic and responded to the prompts by sharing challenges to their beliefs and ideas about basic social norms, perceptions of time and personal space, and the ways they tolerated ambiguity in uncomfortable situations.

Two participants wrote about issues of stereotyping from different perspectives. Emilia wrote about her preexisting stereotypes of Chileans and having this stereotype disconfirmed and challenged during her actual visit abroad and her everyday interactions with Chileans. Eve wrote about how Latinas such as herself were stereotyped in South Korea and evaluated her own stereotypes of Koreans. These participants coped by trying to see things from the perspective of culturally different others, specifically from the perspective of locals.

Emilia was an outgoing Latina student with an interest in politically progressive ideas that were normally well received at her prestigious West Coast public university. She was stunned when her expectations of Chilean people were not met. In her journal article entitled “Warm, Welcoming, and Revolutionary: My Stereotypes of a Chilean,” she “arrived without questioning the expectation” that people in Latin American countries were “welcoming.” She also carried views of Chileans as politically engaged, based on her experiences “seeing pictures of people protesting in the streets, and political street art,” and learning about Chilean political movements and history in school. Once she experienced how difficult it was to make local Chilean friends and learned that not everyone was politically radical or left-leaning, she realized that her views were actually stereotypes. Through these misconceptions and challenges, Emilia learned how “stereotypes can paint the wrong picture for people” by making “things more “simple” and that “societies are more complex than they seem.” She described shifting her

expectations and perceptions of Chileans to be more diverse and inclusive, once she found out that Chileans held wide-ranging political views. She also changed her behavior based on this revised perspective and learned to make friends slowly through other means, including church and volunteer work.

Whereas Emilia wrote about having to shift her perspectives to accommodate new information that contradicted her previously held ideas, Eve, also a Latina student, visited South Korea and described adopting a cultural relativist perspective that involved a nuanced understanding of how Koreans perceived her and critically examining her own stereotypes and judgments of Koreans. As a short woman of color, she frequently encountered Koreans who did not immediately perceive her to be an American because media representations in popular Korean film and television portrayed Americans as tall and White. She also observed how she came to Korea with ideas that Koreans were dramatic because of her experience watching Korean soap opera. She articulated her stereotypes of Koreans and reflected on how she had arrived at her pre- and misconceptions:

When I got to Korea I realized that the only image or knowledge that I had of Korean people and culture was what I learned through watching Korean dramas, comedy shows, documentaries, or going to Korean restaurants near my school. In addition, I built stereotypes from my Korean language and history classes at my university. When I got here, I realized that I had a very “American” version of Korea.

However, she observed that general cultural differences were “neither good [n]or bad, just different,” and that she was “not here to change the way people think, to judge the way they do things, or to teach them about the way things should be done.” She found that, “instead of looking at stereotypes as a bad thing, I’ve decided to have fun with it and try to create a more representative picture of what America is.” She reasoned that the stereotypes “[weren’t] meant to be negative” and that they commonly resulted from ignorance that could be corrected through actual situations and encounters with people. She found that people who held these stereotypes were not “rude” but rather “very

curious about American culture and who want[ed] to know more about me and America.” She identified her goal “to experience what it’s like to live in the South Korean culture. That includes learning the language, talking to the people of South Korea, eating the local food, listening to their music, learning about the way people think about certain topics, etc.”

Both Emilia’s and Eve’s experiences abroad went beyond their own immediate observations by looking more deeply at cultural stereotypes and assumptions and trying to understand different perspectives. Their written reflections also included how their past experiences informed their current interactions with people. In other words, they changed their perception as well as their outward behavior to align with new ways of thinking about culture.

These students demonstrated the ability to pivot from their initial anxiety, stress, and difficult circumstances and deeply reflect upon how their circumstances fit into larger cultural and social systems. Openness to cultural difference was expressed in participants’ intercultural experiences, not only as a receptive attitude or communicative skill that emerged through certain contexts, such as excitement or curiosity at trying something new, but also as a longer, durational action sustained through the practice of continued self-questioning, and a searching for alternative explanations to existing knowledge. Students’ writings described these difficult situations by encompassing ideas of needing to stay open, adaptable, and flexible. They acknowledged the validity of their conflicting feelings and perspectives, and refrained from judging their own perspectives nor those of others from a binary, moralistic vantage point. For these students, remaining open meant a willingness to learn from others and recognize how cultural and social differences were constructed. They saw the opportunity to observe their own cultural positioning precisely and to grow into greater awareness of different perspectives and change their behaviors.

Identifying National Perspectives

For some of the students, intercultural perspective shifts occurred in the realms of ideas about national identity and history, stereotyping, and ways of thinking about the environment and demonstrated tensions between their localized ideas and broader, global perspectives. They described their personal experiences with issues that crossed national borders, such as the environment, education, immigration, and drugs. These participants found themselves examining American government policies, public and social good as they learned more about other perspectives, including ones that held greater human, social, or personal benefits. They reflected on aspects of being American, such as values and what being American afforded them in terms of legal rights or social privileges. Frequently, ideas of nationality and American rule of law did not remain at an abstract level for these individuals, but instead were deeply felt at moments where they related the experience of being American with other ways of experiencing the world.

Ted, for instance, found many similarities as well as differences between Buenos Aires and New York City that led him to consider larger differences between the countries of Argentina and the United States, and ideas of governance and society. Both cities were similar in terms of their basic composition of “people, buildings, parks, and restaurants,” with some differences such as pace of life and “distinct unique qualities in terms of night life, food, culture, [and] tradition.” As a student of political science, he was keenly aware of historical political differences between the two countries, particularly concerning Argentina’s previous authoritarian regimes, but he also noted the positive aspects of its current social and democratic governance. He also compared his American and Argentine university experiences and reflected upon the idea of education as a free, public good:

Studying abroad at the University of Buenos Aires has opened up my mind to many things. For one, UBA is a free university available to all residents of Argentina, and one of the most prestigious universities in Latin America. Going to UBA has made me think about my college education in comparison back at [my university], where unfortunately I am taking out

many loans to be able to go to school. It's really amazing that education is prioritized so much in Argentina and made available to all that seek it out.

Like Ted, other participants looked comparatively at issues of national policy and contrasted ideas of human, personal, and social rights and freedoms. In Syria, one participant, Ana, used the opportunity in her "Communities" entry to write about the refugee crisis. Being abroad enabled her to experience firsthand and interact with many of the different groups involved, and recognize differences between American and Jordanian political perspectives and policies on the situation and broader notions of human rights:

More than half of Jordan's population is made up of Palestinian, Iraqi, and Syrian refugees and immigrants. The wide variety of nationalities and backgrounds in Jordan has allowed me to hear various perspectives from people across the globe. Even though each person's point of view can be different no matter where he or she is from, it is very fascinating to learn about what living in Amman can feel like for different groups of people.

She compared Jordanian and American policies on refugee asylum and tried to evaluate both perspectives. On the one hand, she could understand the American perspective of limiting the number of Syrians refugees into the country in order to minimize possible terrorist threats; on the other, she acknowledging how "profound in its simplicity" the Jordanian perspective was in helping people and seeing them as suffering and human.

Another participant, Nikki, wrote that "the greatest change [she] experienced thus far was how [her] perspective on the United States had broadened." She found herself negotiating stereotypes and perceptions of Americans and had "been asked by many English students if she owned a gun." Her observations of stricter gun laws and lower crime in the UK led her to "wonder if the United States would be safer with stronger gun regulations." One strategy she deployed was to "tone down my 'Americanness'" and to be "judged [not] by the country I'm from, but by who I am. I am American, but America doesn't fully define me." In Bolivia, Jake found himself on a visit to a museum on the coca plant where he learned about the plant's healing properties and cultural and spiritual

significance. Afterwards, he questioned the criminalization of coca and suppression of its medicinal and spiritual uses by the United States government, and found himself wanting to share the two different perspectives on coca with his young readers. Collectively, these students found themselves questioning national normative policies and exploring issues that called into question the relationship between individual, national, international, or global ideas of freedom and rights.

Reevaluating Personal, Social, and Environmental Relations

In some cases, participants modified their outward behavior to adjust to new perspectives—not simply as a way to adapt to their new circumstances and gain outward, social acceptance—but as a way that challenged their self-understanding and being. They looked at these larger global issues from several different perspectives, including the perspectives of local residents and national government policies, and how cultural and social values might inform individual and collective behavior and action. Many lifestyle and sociocultural behaviors pertaining to environmental conservation were new to the students, such as regularly riding bicycles for transportation, producing less non-renewable waste, and having extensive recycling and trash-sorting procedures. Although they were initially unfamiliar, participants found these behaviors and practices sensible, as well as ethically and socially responsible.

Manny, a participant studying aerospace engineering in Bristol, England, was drawn to the general commitment and attention by many people in the United Kingdom to climate change, and the commitment he saw in Bristolians to helping the environment and what he saw as “their global perspective that they address at the city level.” He also observed residents riding bicycles, and differences between American and European conservation habits, such as being charged for plastic bags at grocery stores to reduce waste. With a Bristolian friend, Manny urged the university to divest from fossil fuels. He described changing his behavior as a result of learning from the environmental

conscientiousness of city residents. He observed that “the policy has help me learn to reuse plastic bags. It is not about the price that I don’t want to pay, but it is about conscience,” and his changed attitude regarding the ethical value of conservation and his own personal and social responsibility to others.

Another participant, Steve, wrote about his personal experiences and different perspectives that he encountered on the issue of waste disposal in Senegal. Steve struggled with witnessing people he knew as well as strangers littering the streets, and the regular sight of piles of garbage that had not been disposed of properly by the city government. As he stated, “Here, I often struggle seeing good people and close friends (like my host brother) toss a plastic bag to the side of the road.” However, he added that it was “important to note that not everyone thinks of littering in that way,” and attributed the problem of litter and poor waste disposal to many factors, including a lack of infrastructure for garbage collection, and need for education to change attitudes toward plastic and other forms of waste. Steve brought in alternative perspectives to support his views, such as seeing how cleanliness was valued by people, including his host family, in their homes, and how he saw people sweeping local streets. He also described how Senegalese worked together on a local level as well as through NGOs to educate each other about the environmental impact of waste and plastic: “Government, NGOs, businesses, community— all have a stake in dealing with waste in Senegal and will play important roles in solving it.” In his writing, Steve demonstrated deeper reflection by provided multiple perspectives and questioning his own immediate reactions to a sometimes uncomfortable and different context.

Similarly, Tony wrote about urban pollution in the city of Madrid. He experienced feeling short of breath while running in the city, and seeing the large cloud of pollution that Madrid called “le boina,” or “the beret,” floating over the city. In his entry on community issues, he described checking his perspectives by speaking with other locals

about urban pollution and learning about various policies that had been established to reduce pollution and increasing sustainable forms of transportation.

Participants' writings and interpretations of their experiences in these moments of deeper reflection were based upon relational, rather than unidirectional, understanding. As their writings indicated, their learning was not demonstrative of their experiences as "sponges" immersed in a new environment, but rather part of a context where they were actively modulating their learning with previous and new knowledge, evaluating their interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds, and changing in their actions, thinking, and affect. Participants moved fluidly between describing the relationship of local concerns and actions with larger global issues. They set up their actions, attitudes, behavior, and beliefs as they engaged with other perspectives through direct experience and interaction, and as they were situated within larger local (city) and global issues. These participants demonstrated awareness of the local embeddedness of their perspectives, including their own. Their intercultural learning was therefore mapped more closely onto deeper, reflective writing.

Deep Reflection and Affective Change

Intercultural learning can also encompass affective processes, including changed attitudes, feelings, and emotions associated with empathy or attachment. Affect refers to "overlapping bodily and emotional phenomena such as sensations, desire, passions, feelings, and moods" (Howard, 2015, p. 2). One of the most prominent self-reported affective changes in the majority of the participants' writings occurred in their descriptions of heightened attachment to people and places. In their farewell articles, the majority of participants described having strong connections to their local communities and surroundings.

Bailey's perspective of her time in Jordan shifted from a simplistic view of cultural difference and feelings of discomfort to a dynamic field of "complex" feelings that

resulted from the diversity of experiences that she had, and depth and breadth of the relationships she had developed. She felt passionately about her friendships and related to her audience that “until [she started] studying Arabic and making friends, [she] realized that [she] did not know one true thing about the Middle East or Islam.” In an earlier journal entry entitled “My Jordanian Host Family and Popping the Personal Bubble,” she wrote about how her Jordanian host family occupied each other’s space and the sharing and crowding and noise in their small house. She “miss[ed her] personal bubble” in the United States, where she had more personal space and private time. In her farewell journal entry, she observed that “life was not simple” and “filled with confusing things that were not black and white.” She contrasted her experiences feeling overwhelmed with the “smells and sounds of the city” and missing home with finding moments of beauty. By the end of her journey, Bailey found her “heart becoming wider every day” as she became “close with [her] classmates, the staff of the program, wacky Arabic professors, host family, and the rare, beneficent taxi driver.” She grew in her “capacity for love” and realization that “people from all corners of the world have an immense capacity for love and friendship.” Similarly, Alyssa in Denmark wrote about her capacity to grow and love others:

I have learned so much about myself as well as the world around me. By traveling on my own to various countries, I am confident in my ability to adapt to new situations and environments. Not only that, but the countless friends I made and my loving host family have given me a solid networking base that transcends distance and culture.

In his farewell article, Ryan compared Japanese and American perspectives. Although he identified differences between the two groups, he came to the conclusion that “all people are fundamentally the same.... I have found that at heart most people want to get along and have a good time. I believe that if we can all respect each other then the dream of world peace can be a reality.”

Stephy wrote that she was around Swedes all the time and would miss their kindness and the “amazing” people that she worked with, including her lab partner, Robert, whom she called “Swede Extraordinaire.” To Stephy, Robert not only helped her become acclimated to research; he had also become a valued friend. Elsewhere, participants used language such as “fallen in love,” or missing “the people.”

Another participant, Becca, described a changed perspective and empathy for non-native speakers of English after her own experiences in Argentina. Although she was proficient in Spanish, she was still corrected in conversation by native Spanish speakers. She described “seeking out people who did not speak English” and even learning to “break the ice by welcoming a person to correct mistakes” rather than “become irritated by the correction.” These exchanges brought her greater sensitivity and “more understanding of others reaching to communicate in English,” and helped her to change her approach to second language exchange by being more patient with strangers and not laughing. In regard to her own Spanish language learning process, she adopted a slightly different approach by laughing at her mistakes and “not taking it too seriously.”

Participants’ expressions of affect and connectivity to their new surroundings were typical of phases of intercultural adaptation, suggesting that many of the participants went through initial shock and gradual acclimation to their surroundings. By the time of their departures, they were reluctant to return home. Participants demonstrated what educators at Wabash University distinguish as

synthetic, integrative universalism. It leaves one able to recognize the significance, richness, and uniqueness of other cultures (to see through others’ eyes without imposing one’s own view upon them), but also able to recognize trans-cultural commonalities with universal value. (“Review of the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) for Assessing Outcomes of A Liberal Arts Education,” n.d.)

This idea is similar to the underlying conceptual framework of cosmopolitan communication and the desire to connect with culturally different others. Both

perspectives include valuing individual beings and their unique histories and experiences, while also acknowledging a shared humanity and personal responsibility to others.

Staying Open: Reflective Openness to the Unknown

Reflection also includes a temporal component, since experiences are recorded and then analyzed in a way that might enable new understanding and patterns to appear.

Perhaps most rare were instances where participants demonstrated all the following traits and sensibilities: cosmopolitan openness, affective transformation, and the ability to make connections with their personal experiences and larger historical, political narratives and ideas. One example of deep reflection over time (and not simply over the course of a single article) can be found in the writing of Dan, a first-generation Vietnamese-American student who had never traveled to Asia prior to his study abroad experience. Dan shared about his transformed perspectives of Vietnam to his audience and exhibited these diverse facets of cosmopolitan communication and openness.

In an assigned journal article about different perspectives, Dan entitled his article “Moving Past the Past and Toward the Future.” He wrote that growing up in the United States, he had always thought of American perceptions of Vietnam as characterized by “guilt, regret or other negative feelings,” and that he himself had “negative impressions of Vietnam as the child of refugees” and thought of Vietnam as a war-torn, impoverished country. He traveled to Vietnam “to understand the Vietnamese perspective of the war and what Vietnam [was] like today.” However, once in Vietnam, his perception was changed dramatically, as he discovered how Vietnamese perspectives of the war against America were different from what he had imagined. He learned that a common perception of “the American War,” as he discovered the Vietnam War was called in Vietnam, was its role in a longer struggle against colonial powers, and America was viewed as one enemy to beat among many others in order to achieve independence. He presently experienced Vietnam not as a “war-torn country” but one of “optimism,”

economic and social change, and warmth, where American tourists like him were welcomed,” and Vietnamese people were “eager to learn about American pop culture [and] speak English.”

As mentioned in the literature review, cosmopolitan communication addresses how cultural differences are communicatively produced, and how differences intersect with issues of power, privilege, and social justice. In Dan’s instance, he demonstrated how cultural differences were produced through discourses of war and military history. Dan wrote about his personal experience with the openness of many Vietnamese people toward American culture and their receptiveness of him. In addition, he demonstrated a shift in his thinking about his prior ideas of Vietnam’s history and people. Through his interactions with Vietnamese people and his personal experiences traveling and visiting, Dan explored his own nation-centric thinking and his process of changed thinking.

In his final article, Dan later described how the experience of studying abroad enabled him to gain a new “life” without completely abandoning his past life, which he described would be merged with his second life when he returned to the United States.

Studying and living abroad is a way to greatly expand your mind. I like to compare traveling with living two different lives. When you leave your home country for another, you essentially leave the “old you” behind. I left the “Dan in America” behind when I went to Vietnam. I started a new life: the life of “Dan in Vietnam.” When you start a new life abroad, you make new friends, learn new things and even develop new habits. When you go back to your home country, your two lives merge together. You have new perspectives, new beliefs and new ideas. You yourself have changed, and things just don’t feel the same as before.

Interestingly, all of the individuals demonstrated elsewhere in their journal entries that they were open and curious about their distant online audience of American schoolchildren. These findings show that cosmopolitan openness is neither inclusive nor mutually exclusive of aspects of reflection and the types of change associated with intercultural learning; it is possible to communicate with cosmopolitan openness, yet

maintain simple views of cultural similarity and difference of groups bound within nation-states.

Challenges of Reflecting upon Intercultural Learning

This analysis examined reflection in an online, pedagogical context from the perspectives of intercultural learning. Over the course of their semester study abroad programs, participants shared their experiences and the arc of their journeys, from their lives before traveling abroad, to the arrival and daily routines in their new surroundings, and their imminent departure. As a group, the participants wrote about having a diversity of experiences in their new environments, describing where they resided and also where they traveled, who they met, what they ate and how they commuted around, what types of professional or specialized training they were undertaking while abroad, how they used language in context, in addition to numerous other anecdotes and stories that collectively brought meaning to their journeys. Frequently, these stories included comparisons between their new environments and the lives, practices, and habits of people in the United States. On occasion, participants would make cultural generalizations in order to make their points about cultural difference.

Dimensions of deeper written reflection, analysis, interpretation, and ultimately translation—since participants were translating their experiences into intelligible writing for their young audiences—emerged for some participants when they investigated particular issues, such as environmental conservation or cultural stereotyping. They compared their own attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs to different perspectives, while they also attempted to understand how these different perspectives fit into specific local, national, and global contexts. In other words, they considered different perspectives within local cultural constructs and also as they related to these perspectives through the lens of being American citizens, or as study abroad sojourners, college students, or

English language speakers. These perspectives were explorations of their own thinking and demonstrations of connecting personal lived experiences to other perspectives, and making connections between issues at local, national, and global levels.

If deeper forms of reflection are based on relating one's experience to abstract concepts and theories, then only a minority of participants showed evidence of communicating this type of reflection in their writings. There are many possible reasons why this might have been the case: participants may have simply lacked the cognitive capacity or existing training to think more deeply about cultural differences insofar as they presented these differences as essential, stable traits, rather than the result of ongoing historic or political constructions, and contestation (Moloney & Genua-Petrovic, 2012). Other participants, as articulated by Tony in the previous chapter, may have held onto expectations for communicating with their young audiences and thereby censored or filtered themselves in their writing. They explicitly connected their learning to writing that demonstrated more reflective depth by analyzing their assumptions or perspectives, comparing different perspectives, and challenging their own normative ways of thinking. This is not to say that the flexibility or constraints of specific curricular topics determined completely how deeply they wrote about their intercultural learning and supporting experiences, but it was a contributing factor.

To an extent, the audience and curriculum dictated how deeply participants could write about and thereby reflect upon their experiences. Their audiences were primarily middle school and high school classrooms, and they were limited by word count and the need to write from a mixture of objective, factual reporting of their experiences and their sensory encounters. Also, participants were not prompted to go more in depth into their experiences in these shorter articles, and may have needed more explicit guidance. In the first-person journal entries, participants had more freedom to respond to topics that included stereotyping, how they integrated into their new communities, and problems and issues addressed by local communities.

In terms of their personal traits, participants demonstrated the ability to pivot from their anxious, stressful, or difficult circumstances and deeply reflect upon how their circumstances fit into larger cultural and social systems, including their sense of national identity. They acknowledged the validity of their conflicting feelings and perspectives. For these students, remaining open meant a willingness to learn from others and not to exoticize difference, but rather to observe precisely their position in terms of a cultural humility and relativism. From these findings, I observed that the participants, who were themselves portraits of high levels of intercultural competence and sensitivity, could still grow in their capacity for change and self-transformation. They described moments where their ideas of self and other were changed and collectively illustrated many of the dimensions of cosmopolitan communication, such as respect, openness, engagement with difference, and self-transformation as they were assisted with guided prompts and opportunities for dialogue. The final chapter explores the implications of these findings for educators, researchers, and policymakers invested in deepening student learning through reflective practices.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

At the heart of this inquiry lie questions about the relationships between and across writing, reflection, digital media, the actual experience of studying and learning abroad, and values associated with study abroad education and pedagogy. In particular, I was curious to interrogate the idea of “reflection,” which has become somewhat of a pedagogical cliché in study abroad research literature. Educators repeatedly prescribe reflection as an activity students should be engaging in before, during, and after the study abroad experience, and offer recommendations for their colleagues in the field to help students reflect—for instance, how often, with what tools, in what format, to what end and learning outcome, and for whom. In my inquiry, I wanted to examine what reflection might look like and mean in a specific context, namely, for students that were typically not represented in these types of studies who were communicating to home audiences. I explored the types of narratives and experiences students wrote about, and how they communicated their experiences in a pedagogically-oriented digital context. I also wanted to look at the concept of reflection alongside and through the lens of cosmopolitan communication, a way of thinking about interaction and relationality that is not commonly explored in studies of communication and study abroad research.

In this final chapter, I will address critiques of cosmopolitanism as a theoretical and conceptual framework. I then map my findings to conclusions and implications as they connect to the initial inquiry and as they relate to broader ideas of the purpose and

process of reflection and writing for students who are planning to study abroad or who are already abroad. The study is not generalizable, since it explores a specific real-life context, but the following findings may hold implications for future researchers, educators, and policymakers in the field of study abroad education, particularly those interested in writing, reflection, and intercultural learning. After reviewing each finding, I will offer conclusions based on what the findings suggest.

Critiques of Cosmopolitanism

There are many criticisms of cosmopolitanism, most commonly that it is a perspective or ideology that presents a universal ideal of shared humanity that neglects or minimizes historical injustices, structural and systematic power inequalities, and the narratives and lived experiences of oppression. As Todd (2009) writes,

[The] fault lines [of cosmopolitanism] are expressive of a modernist heritage concerned with, on the one hand, the universal appeal to humanity and the cosmopolitan right of hospitality this gives rise to and, on the other hand, the commitment to human pluralism and diversity which this very right of humanity is supposed to fulfill. (p. 47)

Theories of cosmopolitanism have also been criticized for having a conceptual broadness that spans social and transnational identities, a range of philosophical orientations, and political projects, to which philosophers have argued such breadth is a strength that enables cosmopolitan experiences to be present in everyday contexts (Hansen, 2011). Other sociologists have argued that it is important to identify the contexts in which cosmopolitanism as a type of communicative or performative strategy of openness is deployed.

When I conducted the study, I was aware of these issues and tensions existing within theories of cosmopolitanism. I was also aware that educational and communications researchers were rethinking the usefulness of cosmopolitanism as a concept for empirical study and analysis. To review, I drew upon recent research by

Miriam Sobre-Denton and Nilanjana Bardhan (2013) in the area of cosmopolitan communication, using their work as a theoretical lens to explore in my own study dimensions of digitally-mediated communication by study abroad students for a distant audience. Sobre-Denton and Bardhan reinterpreted ideas in cosmopolitan literature for an intercultural educational context, including ideas of a shared or performed identity that encompasses and reaches beyond national borders, and communicating and performing an ethical responsibility to distant others. They articulated their idea of communication as a bridge for shared identity and exchange around common areas of concern, and a type of labor through dialogue and collaboration to mutually empower, as well as critically transform the self. Their discussions of cosmopolitan communication implicated the self and pushed positions of self into an idea of a “We,” or shared positionality and what they called a sense of intercultural, cosmopolitan personhood.

The study privileges the demonstration and performance of cosmopolitan communication insofar as I found most frequently examples of openness in study abroad students’ writing. Participants wrote at length about shared belonging and attachment in their descriptions of interactions with different types and groups of people. In addition, the curriculum was oriented toward cosmopolitan openness, curiosity, and the general consideration of cultural experience from a positive, and non-critical and non-historical perspective. Although there were opportunities to look at the study abroad participants’ communication through a lens that criticized their privilege or the orientation of the curriculum, this was not the focus of my study. I chose to examine several themes of students’ communication that fell into the ideas espoused in cosmopolitan theories, including an identity of being a borderless traveler journeying through different contexts, including other countries, as well as life and school. However, I address the need for educators to engage with students in the practice and pedagogy of critical reflection with a set of recommendations for curriculum following my description of the study’s main findings and conclusions.

Negotiating Identities Through Writing

The first finding is that participants wrote about different identities throughout their experiences, with the identity of a heroic traveler surfacing most frequently. Participants wrote about becoming these types of travelers prior to their journeys as well as while they were abroad, and they advocated for educational opportunities and learning through travel.

Within this larger identity framework of being a traveling educator and advocate for the power of learning through traveling, participants wrote about negotiating other aspects of their identity, including their ethnicity, nationality, gender, and their academic interests. These dimensions of identity were brought out through specific experiences and also through curricular prompts that informed participants' nuanced interpretative descriptions of their experiences. This finding supports other research demonstrating that students negotiate different forms of identity while they study abroad (Cranshaw & Callen, 2001).

Writing about past and present experiences can provide an important platform for students to engage in complex identity work and create identity narratives connecting their cultural and travel experiences. For the research participants, writing about their experiences was a place for them to reflect upon and advocate for educational equity. Identity was constantly shifting and being negotiated, particularly for students who did not fit into typical American study abroad categories or typical undergraduate American college experiences. In addition, the study supported research that students from these underrepresented categories benefit greatly from institutional support, peer mentoring, and opportunities to influence other students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Contrary to common negative perceptions of students traveling abroad as hedonistic, interculturally unaware, and purposeless, the group of young people in the study were committed to continuous learning and to changing social perceptions of traveling abroad

within their own communities and circles of friends. A high number of the participants decided to travel abroad because they wanted to work in fields where they needed linguistic competence or technical knowledge, such as international sustainable development, medicine, business, or law, and they wanted to support others to make similar choices. For educators, researchers, and policymakers, the nuances of students' identities and experiences should be kept in mind when examining studies of learning and study abroad that make generalizations about identity.

Reflection and Communication with Authentic Audiences

The second finding in the study is that participants' knowledge that their words would reach a specific audience impacted the quality and focus of their writing. Participants were thoughtful in their writing and motivated by the topics, deadlines, and the promise of videoconferencing with their audiences. They related to their audiences and found meaning from knowing that people were learning from their experiences. The process also helped them grow in their awareness in better understanding the implications of cultural representation and cultural self-interrogation, and think more deeply about the politics and presentation of curricular development.

From this finding, one can draw the conclusion that there is value in communicating to an authentic audience. There was a real difference as perceived by the participants between reflecting for themselves, for instance, if they kept a private journal or only wrote about their experiences to friends and family, and making their reflections public. Writing for an authentic audience makes the practice of cosmopolitan communication real and helps students evaluate the significance of their experiences outside of themselves and consider issues of cultural representation, and think about ideas of alterity, home, and belonging. It can help them think about their positionality, the work of traveling abroad, and associated ideas of privilege when sharing stories with others.

Similar to observations made by Hull and Stornaiuolo (2014), where young learners felt connected to other young people in a shared distant peer social network, the participants I interviewed felt a sense of connectivity to individuals they did not meet or know. Hull and Stornaiuolo speak of a type of “proper distance” where students sensed a type of intercultural connection in ways that brought in their own perspectives without creating the vulnerability that often exists with sharing personal stories. Writing for authentic audiences can help students identify their educational, social, and emotional purposes abroad and consider how the meaning of their overall experience and individual experiences might be important to them personally as well as to others.

Cultivating Cosmopolitan and Critical Perspectives

The third finding was that cosmopolitan openness surfaced as the main theme in students’ writing besides their traveler identities. Participants were largely drawn to writing about ideas of belonging, connectedness, and home. They found meaning in personal relationships while abroad. In addition, they strongly identified with their audiences and wanted to share the qualities of cosmopolitan openness and receptiveness that they received with their audiences. Whereas a majority of the students wrote about cosmopolitan openness, only a minority of participants talked about experiencing transformation in terms of having their beliefs and assumptions challenged. Similarly, only a minority of students connected their experiences to larger national, global, and transnational policy issues.

The small group of students that communicated about their experiences in these critical ways commented upon changing their existing stereotypes or developing more nuanced understandings of their surroundings and the perspectives of local inhabitants. It was difficult to make generalizations as to why some of the participants reflected in writing in this way and others did not, because their study abroad programs were all so

different and they came from such different backgrounds. Many of these students were among the top writers of the cohort, and also came from top-ranking public universities with high levels of academic achievement. It is possible that those who did question their own cultural framing may have had previous forms of intercultural training. As mentioned before, they were supported by the global education curriculum and its focus on pedagogically-oriented writing. This structure gave participants context to their audience of readers and organized their writing by facilitating their responses to prompts on challenging issues such as their relationship to the environment, their observations of local community issues, and their experiences with stereotyping or being stereotyped.

From this, a conclusion can be drawn that the structure and overall curricular goals of written reflection as well as audience are influential in directing how students communicate about their experience. Perhaps more significantly, this study affirms that writing about experiences does not necessarily lead to critical reflection or deep self-transformation. Students need guidance and prompting to connect their experiences to broader ideas. Those that did write in this way may have been better writers, or taken some type of intercultural preparation where they engaged with this type of thinking. The implication of this is that program structure as well as intercultural background knowledge or previous training play important roles in the process of reflection.

Recommendations for Practice

The depth of students' reflection, specifically in regard to writing, is contingent upon a number of factors, including their writing ability, prior educational preparation in intercultural learning, program type, and expected learning outcomes. Benda (2010) also argues that, to an extent, if students write for readers other than themselves, their writing is subject to the values and interpretations of their readers. The practice of writing about experience may not lead to change, nor is it necessarily critical, but it can also express

other qualities of experience and ways of communicating, including type of cosmopolitan openness evidenced by the majority of participants. Reflection upon familiar and unfamiliar experiences can be scaffolded through prompts that can help students make personal connections as well as expanded understandings in their ideas of culture, locality, nationality, and global relationships. If the goal for educators is to improve the quality of participant reflection and facilitate investigation of one's perceptual lens, then it might help build in prompts asking students to think relationally about stereotypes, help them consider their own normativity, and facilitate consideration of thinking about the impact of their experiences and narratives on others, including their friends and families back home, or other people.

Based on the findings, conclusions, and implications, I make the following recommendations for study abroad pedagogy:

1. Give SA students the opportunity to write about their experiences to a variety of audiences, which can bring out different ways of thinking about their experiences and considerations of who is the "Other" and what the broader significance of their experiences might mean.

2. Written reflection should be engaging and, when aimed at authentic audiences, can provide motivation. The process of writing for others and reflecting upon one's experiences can be an opportunity to cultivate dimensions of cosmopolitan openness, including empathy and curiosity toward others. With appropriate prompts and curricular contexts, written reflection can offer students opportunities to engage with hospitable, open interactions.

3. The genre of travel writing can be a valuable pedagogical tool. However, students might need help with thinking about their journey from the perspective of a "curriculum of contact" rather than a simple "curriculum of travel." Talburt (2009) makes such a distinction between "curriculum of contact," which brings to light relationality, history, and power dynamics of cultural visitation, versus a curriculum of travel and a

superficial engagement with experience. Students can be guided in learning more about travel and power: educators can help them identify who may or may not travel, what privilege comes with travel, and other issues that arise in discussions of traveling, tourism, capitalism, globalization, mobility and consumption.

5. This study also urges educators to reflect upon their own values toward study abroad education and the many ways students can communicate about their experiences, with or without a public audience. The work of cultivating cosmopolitan communication and reflective openness and the work of cultivating critical self-interrogation may require different curricular directions and forms of pedagogical support. These normative ways of communicating and learning can overlap and diverge, offering students a plethora of ways to consider how they interact and relate to others.

6. Finally, this study urges institutions to make a continued effort to support scholarship students and increase student diversity. Support can be provided through many means, including financial resources or opportunities to reflect through writing or offer peer mentorship to other students. This study suggests that reflection and study abroad continue to be important vehicles for intercultural learning and that students that may need the most institutional support stand to make gains in many areas, including language, social, emotional, professional, and intercultural development.

Recommendations for Curriculum

Additionally, I wish to address the limitations of the curriculum I studied and suggest some alternative curricular directions curriculum developers and designers may wish to pursue. First, it is important to acknowledge that the curriculum was intended for younger students and was not actually meant as a primary pedagogical tool for the older audience who were writing about their experiences. The curriculum functioned as a vehicle for student reflection, but it was not designed specifically with the study abroad

students' reflection in mind. Therefore, it did not provide space for students to discuss certain issues they may have been thinking about since they were concerned with the ways they were perceived by younger students in a classroom context.

When one participant shared with me during an interview, "Talking with you about my experiences has been one of the best things that I've done while abroad," I realized students were gaining insight and reflecting through conversation as well as through the regular practice of writing about their experiences. Aside from the complimentary nature of the participants' comment, it led to further thinking about the need for students to talk about their experiences while abroad in a type of check-in capacity. While I am not advocating for educators to become students' therapists, I do think there is value in periodic individual conversations with students while abroad, if such time is available for educators. Group conversations may also allow students to explore the complicated emotions and experiences in a safe way that may positively trigger deeper levels of analysis into their normative cultural assumptions. This may be particularly helpful for students whose strength might lie in oral communication and not written reflection.

I offer some of the following suggestions for more critically-oriented curricular directions aimed specifically for study abroad educators and curriculum developers:

1. Study abroad programs should offer opportunities for interaction between university educators and students who are studying abroad. Even a single online, videoconferenced conversation between a study abroad student and an educator may be beneficial in generating reflective thinking and communication. Such a conversation might involve an educator's direct questioning to students to think more analytically about their experiences and look more deeply at certain feelings and emotions.

2. Some issues and concerns, such as the existence of structural or historic inequalities, may not be immediately noticeable to students. Educators can help students think about these potentially overlooked but important topics and issues in their study abroad experiences. For instance, educators can help students to further investigate

historical reasons for normalized everyday behavior, activities, or social organization, or policies that they may observe or engage with in their new living and learning contexts. Through specific prompts or other forms of guidance, including in situ conversations and discussions, or even in their pre-departure preparation, educators can guide study abroad students to think more deeply about their own privilege and interrogate their understanding of societal and socioeconomic relationships.

3. Talking to multiple audiences can help study abroad students think and reflect more freely about the different dimensions of their experience. It was not possible for the study abroad students in my study to share their opinions or experiences with certain controversial topics with their younger audiences, such as their experiences with sexuality or postcolonial oppression, or their encounters with different perspectives on such topics that they might experience while abroad. They felt that discussion of such topics rendered them vulnerable or might be perceived as inappropriate within the bounds of the prescribed curriculum. However, as was seen, the study abroad students wished to talk about these experiences. Educators can organize other forums for study abroad students to discuss challenging ideas with distant audiences in a comfortable, safe way.

4. The exercise of writing or conversing about one's experience undertaken several months to half a year after return is another way to help students critically reflect upon their experiences. A longer span of time provides students with some distance to return from their travels and recollect their experiences in ways whereby immediate post-return reflection might be colored by students' mixed emotions toward leaving and their anticipation in returning home. Explicit prompts can guide students in making connections between their experiences with larger ideas. For example, educators can consider how their experiences might be evaluated through the lenses of social and economic privilege or through critiques of institutional and structural power dynamics.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many directions for future researchers interested in exploring student narratives of the study abroad experience and the process and practice of reflection. Researchers may also want to look more closely at the variances and differences between individual students and groups when they engage with topics of educational travel, and not make generalizations based on traditional student travelers—they may wish to conduct research on the relationship between reflection and marginalized traveling perspectives.

Reflection formats and modalities are other interesting areas for empirical investigation. This study focused on student prose and non-fiction text. However, reflection need not be limited to writing or words. In an era characterized by multimodal representation and brevity of written language, researchers may seek to compare and examine the affordances of different forms of multimodal expression, such as the use of video and audio media in reflection. In addition, the timing of reflection may also be an interesting place for researchers to explore; for instance, Todd (2013) investigated the use of multimedia storytelling and reflection as a form of reentry education for study abroad students.

This study also touched upon participants' digital media habits. Future research may wish to explore more closely the relationship between the content and practice of student writing, the quality and depth of reflection, and students' digital media habits while abroad. Findings from this study suggest that claims about digital media interference with participant learning are overstated. Participants used digital media to communicate regularly with their friends and family in the United States and also to write to their American-based school audience of schoolchildren. None of the participants were banned from using their smartphones to communicate with their friends and families in

the United States, and yet they were still able to demonstrate aspects of intercultural learning and cosmopolitan communication in a digitally-mediated context.

Finally, other researchers may wish to explore more deeply the relationships between different types of intercultural training or preparation, reflection, and students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, as this study was somewhat of a test case for the usefulness of cosmopolitan communication as a lens to illuminate student learning and communication while abroad, it may be useful for other educators and researchers to try to explore its conceptual robustness in other study abroad contexts.

Cultivating Cosmopolitan Communication Through Written Reflection

At the present moment, we live in a social and educational context that privileges acquisition of knowledge and facts, and highly prescribed ideas of intercultural exchange as is still commonly taught in intercultural training. Thoughtful communication that speaks deeply to the realities of lived cultural experience and the intersections of the global and local can be practiced in school classrooms, in informal learning contexts, or enacted through study abroad curriculum. In an era characterized by xenophobic nationalist rhetoric and the echo chamber of Internet discourse, it is important to develop diverse voices that speak truth to power and challenge hegemonic ideas and narratives while also creating spaces for safe, open, and warm communicative exchanges.

This study urges researchers, educators, and policymakers to be mindful of how students communicate while abroad and to consider the range and variation in their communication and experiences that might generate opportunities for learning. As this research shows, pedagogically-oriented written reflection that is aimed at an authentic audience can add value and depth to the study abroad experience by helping students to gain awareness of their own normative lenses for understanding the world. When carefully designed, written reflection can help students communicate about their

experiences with care, sensitivity, and intentionality to their audiences. It can help orient students toward sensibilities of connectedness to others while avoiding romantic ideas of relating to a transcendent, imaginary sense of humanity.

Whereas an abundance of research literature on study abroad examines student learning outcomes at the end of their experiences, often unwittingly functioning as evaluations of student satisfaction, the exploration of processes of reflection offer glimpses into students' learning in situ. As documents of experience, students' reflective writing when practiced regularly and rigorously is a place where they can explore their shifting identities, feelings, and self-critical and interrogative thinking. The practice of writing can open up possibilities of communication to different audiences and challenge one's self-understanding and relationality, even if the appearance of such communication is not guaranteed.

Many students living and learning abroad want to come home from their journeys and share with their friends and families exciting stories of travel and self-development, ultimately fulfilling their goals of having pleasurable experiences. However, this study affirms that there are plenty of other students who are equally aware that studying abroad is difficult psychological and ethical work that carries the possibility of destabilizing their worldviews and self-concepts in ways where "transformation" may mean more than having a pleasant or satisfying experience. It would be remiss to prepare both types of students for their journey without bringing to their attention the greater significance of their studies and helping them take responsibility for transformation of their own cultural understanding. Although it is not necessary to travel in order to communicate from a cosmopolitan perspective, studying abroad provides a unique opportunity for learners to face challenges to their perceptions of self and other through firsthand experiences and the effort of building knowledge through and upon such experiences. Rather than assuming that learners can easily do this on their own, educators can work to help learners cultivate cosmopolitan communication and create the conditions for reflective

openness through writing to authentic audiences and connect their personal experiences to larger ideas and issues.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email to All Participants

Dear Gilman Scholars,

You are cordially invited to participate in a research project conducted by Sophie Lam, a doctoral student in Communication and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Your participation in the study will contribute to research that investigates how study abroad students reflect upon their experiences in a program of online educational exchange.

Participation in the study will involve your granting the researcher permission to review and use both excerpts of your written articles for Reach The World from September through December 2015 and your end-of-semester Gilman evaluation survey responses. Your information will be kept confidential in the research study.

As compensation for your participation, you will be entered into a raffle for \$25, \$50, and \$75 Amazon gift cards.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and independent of the Gilman Program and Reach The World. It is not endorsed by the U.S. Department of State or the Institute of International Education (IIE), and there is no bearing on your participation in the Gilman Program or Reach The World if you decline.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Ms. Lam directly at the email address below. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sophie Lam
EdD candidate and researcher in Communication and Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
ssl102@tc.columbia.edu
Teachers College IRB Protocol #15-333

Appendix B

Recruitment Email to Key Informants

Dear Gilman Scholars,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study on study abroad and reflection conducted by Sophie Lam, doctoral candidate in Communication and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

You have been selected to participate in the study as a key informant in a qualitative research study exploring how students communicate their study abroad experiences in an online educational program. Your perspectives will contribute to advancing scholarly understanding of the process of reflection while abroad. Your participation in the study will also potentially help to improve the design and implementation of study abroad programs.

As a key informant your participation in the study will involve

- Permission to use your end-of-semester Gilman evaluation survey responses.
- Permission to use excerpts of your written articles for Reach The World
- A 60-minute Skype or Google Hangout interview about your experiences as a travel correspondent
- A request for two audiorecordings of your Reach The World Skype videoconferences

As compensation for your participation, you will receive \$50 upon completion of the study.

Participation is entirely voluntary and independent of the Gilman Program and Reach The World. It is not endorsed by the U.S. Department of State or the Institute of International Education (IIE), and there is no bearing on your participation in the Gilman Program or Reach The World if you decline.

Interested individuals should fill out the online consent form here [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/StudyAbroadReflection_KI]. The consent form includes further description of the research project. Your information will be kept confidential in the research study.

If you have any concerns, please contact the Gilman Program at gilman_scholars@iie.org. If you have general questions about the study, please contact Ms. Lam directly at the email address below. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sophie Lam

EdD candidate and researcher in Communication and Education

Teachers College, Columbia University

ssl102@tc.columbia.edu

Teachers College IRB Protocol #15-333

Appendix C

Survey Questions

1. What is your ethnic background?
2. Did you take language classes abroad? Yes/No/Other
3. What was your living situation while abroad?
Home stay/Dormitory/Apartment/Other
4. Was this your first time traveling outside of the United States? Yes/No/Other
5. What was your predeparture preparation or training?
6. How many times did you videoconference with your matched classroom?
1/2/3+/I did not videoconference with my classroom
7. What experience or topic for Reach the World did you most enjoy writing about? Why?
8. How did you come to decide upon writing about this experience or topic?
9. What experience or topic for Reach the World was the most challenging for you to write about? Why?
10. How did you come to decide upon writing about this experience?
11. How would you compare your experiences writing online for a middle school audience and documenting your journey for other audiences?
12. What does it mean to communicate a global experience?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

State name, university, major, school studying abroad,
Any other foreign languages and prior travel experience?

Deciding to study abroad and Gilman fellowship?

Predeparture preparation

What are your reflections on the experience of participating in Reach The World?

How would you describe your interactions with your editor at Reach The World?

OMIT & ASK LATER How would you describe your videoconferencing interactions with the middle school students in the United States?

I would like to look at one article that you wrote. Can you talk me through one article that you wrote?

Why you chose to communicate your experiences in this way?

Can you summarize what you learned from writing about your experiences online?

Photographs

Besides creating online curricular content for Reach the World, how did you digitally document your experiences abroad? Who was your intended audience?

Can you compare your experiences writing online for a middle school audience and documenting your journey for other audiences?

Please make the following comparison: what are you able to communicate to students in the United States that local person (a resident of your present locale) would not? How would students' experience communicating with a local person be different from communicating with you, a study abroad student?

How did you compose your articles for your particular audience?

Any concluding thoughts?

Appendix E

Informed Consent Agreement

Principal Researcher: Sophie Lam

Title of Study: The global is personal: exploring how students communicate their study abroad experiences in an online pedagogical context

Description of the study

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study investigating how students communicate their study abroad experiences in an online pedagogical context. By soliciting student perspectives, the research aims to understand how global education pedagogy and curriculum supports student learning while abroad.

Your participation in the study will entail two parts:

- An interview conducted through an online videoconferencing application such as GoogleHangout or Skype that will be no more than 60 minutes long in duration
- Permission to analyze your online articles on the Reach The World website

In the interview, you will be asked about your opinions and attitudes regarding your experience as an online correspondent for the global education program Reach The World. The interview will be conducted online via GoogleHangout or Skype by Sophie Lam, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and recorded and transcribed with your permission.

Risks and Benefits

Although there are no direct benefits to your participation in the study, one potential indirect benefit is the opportunity for structured reflection upon your study abroad experience and your participation in the global education program. Your participation will also produce indirect benefits to educators, policymakers, and researchers in some of the following scholarly and practical areas of educational research: a) knowledge of how students develop their intercultural and global competence b) recommendations to improve study abroad learning experiences and c) recommendations to improve the design and implementation of global education programs. The only risks of participation in the study are boredom and fatigue associated with a job interview conducted via videoconference. You have the option of withdrawing from the study at any time without penalties or consequences.

Payment

You will receive \$50 in compensation for the study.

Data Storage

You will not be identified by name at any point in the research findings. The data will be securely stored on an encrypted hard drive and coded. The only individual with access to the data will be the principal researcher.

How the research will be used

The research will be used for a dissertation submitted in fulfillment of partial requirements of a doctoral degree at Teachers College, Columbia University. Data and research findings may also be published in an academic journal or presented at academic research conferences.

Appendix F

Participant's Rights

Principal Investigator: Sophie Lam

Research Title: The global is personal: exploring how students communicate their study abroad experiences in an online pedagogical context

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (646) 784-5950.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- If video and/or audio taping is part of this research, I () consent to be audiotaped. I () do NOT consent to being audio taped. The written and audio taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator and members of the research team.
- Written and audio taped materials () may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research
() may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.
- My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Name: _____

Appendix G

Excerpts from the Editorial Guide provided for Student Travelers

This guide was provided to student travelers as an attached document in an orientation email. The document introduced them to different writing formats and outlined prompts for their weekly written texts.

In order to provoke deep critical-thinking, we have designed our article prompts to address three, overarching essential questions. Our essential questions invite students to go on a virtual journey with you. We also hope these questions will be compelling for you in the field. Our three essential questions are:

How am I connected to my world?
How does where I live affect how I live?
How can I make the travelers' journey my journey?

As you compose your articles, we ask that you keep these questions in mind. Consider the ways in which you can explain the significance of what you are experiencing. Address the impact of the environment and culture. Write as descriptively as possible so that your students feel like they are sitting beside you.

Appendix H

Example Prompts from 3 Article Types

The Travelers were required to produce three types of writing over the course of their study abroad semesters, including field notes, journal articles, and logbooks. Field notes were 500-700 word entries and an additional article type where participants responded to topical questions and embedded sub-questions on food, transportation, nature, daily life, and the environment. Logbooks were 300-600 word, short answer responses to questions about travel, nature, and personal news, while journal articles were 500-700 word, short essays writing in first-person narrative on topics such as the participant's autobiography, reasons for studying abroad, experiences in the country, recognition of different perspectives, or comparing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning in one's home versus host country.

Example prompt from a Field Note on Communities:

What community need did I learn about?

Introduction:

Why does the community have this need?

Is this need being met? How?

Example prompt from a Field Note on Food:

Introduction:

What food did I try?

How did I feel when I tried it?

How is the food prepared?

Is the food connected to the environment? How?

Example prompts from two potential Journal Articles:

Recognizing Perspectives:

This journal is designed to broaden thinking and understanding about countries abroad. Some questions to consider are: What are some stereotypes that you better understand now by living in a different country? How has your perspective changed during your study abroad experience?

Farewell:

This is the last message between a Study Abroad Traveler and the classroom. This Journal should wrap up your experience and bid farewell to your students. You should reflect on your semester by re-reading your published Journals to date, and leave your students with your personal advice to them they continue their own journeys toward college and career.

Logbook:

How far did I travel this week?

How far have I traveled on this journey so far?

How did I get around this week?

What's the most interesting place I visited this week?

Other travel news:

What main languages are spoken here?

What type of money is used here?

What was the best meal this week?

What music did I listen to this week?

What activity was the most fun this week?

What did I read this week?

Time Zone:

Local Time: